This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

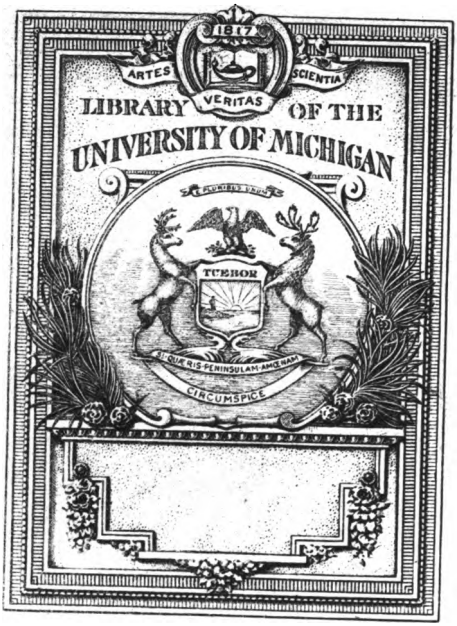
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



Digitized by Google

DC
112
.A12
D84

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

DC
112
.M2
D84

Eminent Women Series

EDITED BY JOHN H. INGRAM

MARGARET OF ANGOULÊME

QUEEN OF NAVARRE

(All rights reserved.)

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

28244

MARGARET OF ANGOULÊME

QUEEN OF NAVARRE

BY

MARY F. ROBINSON

LONDON:
W. H. ALLEN & CO., 13 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

1886.

(*All rights reserved.*)

Digitized by Google

LONDON:
PRINTED BY W. H. ALLEN AND CO., 13 WATERLOO PLACE, S.W.

Digitized by Google

PREFACE.

The sixteenth century, that age of great women, shows few more truly eminent than the sister of Francis I. Margaret of Angoulême, of Valois, and of France, Queen of Navarre, Duchess of Alençon and Berry, was a person of importance in many different ways. In political influence, she was, perhaps, excelled by Margaret of Austria, Catherine de Medici, and Elizabeth of England; and Elizabeth, if not more devoted, was at least more successful as a reformer of Religion. But the Queen of Navarre possessed many qualities foreign to these famous names. Of all the women of her age, Vittoria Colonna alone was her rival in literary attainments; and in the rarer and more illustrious authority of personal grace and charm, she was unequalled save by Mary Queen of Scots, or the magical Diana of Poictiers.

The student of character may find another interest in the sweet, dense, simple spirit of Margaret—a comparatively trifling and unreal nature by the side of the vehement and audacious personages of her time, but which, none the less, directed them, influenced them, and checked their headlong course, in the same manner

Digitized by Google

as the youthful character of Raphael maintained an unceasing authority over the wilder spirits of his school.

It is in her influence that we must seek the prestige of the Queen of Navarre, and not in her faded literary laurels, or in a personality rather interesting than great. It was she who inspired the College of France; it was she who protected and guaranteed the Renaissance in France from the ignorant rage of the Sorbonne. She was, in Melancthon's phrase, the Divinity of the great religious movement of her time, and the upholder of the mere natural rights of humanity in an age that only respected opinions.

It is thus, as an organic part of the history of her time, as an influence, as an inspiring spirit, that I have tried to depict her, and not as a sequestered individual. The task is intricate and large, and the space given me to fill is very narrow. But, so far as it goes, this little sketch may, perhaps, be of some service in indicating the movements of the earlier French Renaissance. I have tried to make it, as far as possible, correct. I have, in most instances, sought my facts in the many published volumes of original documents, rather than in any subsequent history; and where I have given an unusual date, it is, I hope, most often because recent research has disproved the earlier reading.

Recent research, ever so commendably critical and untiring in France, has happily disproved many last-century scandals, and one revived not many years ago. M. Lutteroth, in a Review called *Le Semeur*, and

Digitized by Google

M. le Comte de la Ferrière, in his introduction to the *Account-Book of the Queen of Navarre,* have, with others, satisfactorily proved that a certain compromising letter, which tradition gave to the year 1521, must be dated as 1525, the year of Margaret's hurried flight from Spain; in which circumstances, as will be seen, the construction to be placed upon it involves no shade of censure.

No doubt some confusion with the gay and brilliant Reine Margot, queen of many lovers, has been the origin of the unfounded scandals which haunt the memory of the earlier Margaret. For the younger princess was also Margaret of Valois and of France, also the wife of a Henry, King of Navarre. Moreover, Brantôme wrote of our heroine, "*En fait de galanterie, elle en sçavoit plus que de son pain quotidien.*" But we must remember that, in Brantôme's eyes, the sense of intrigue and of amours was by no means the only sense of *galanterie,* which signified, indeed—as properly it still should do—rather gentility, courteous and magnanimous behaviour, chivalry, and pleasing address. No phrase could be more suited to Margaret, the generous Egeria of two royal courts, the story-teller *par excellence* of her age, whose palace at Nérac assumed the double aspect of an asylum for persecuted scholars and a refined and spiritual Court of Love.

Digitized by Google

LIST OF AUTHORITIES.

I.—Contemporary.

1. *Lettres de Marguerite d'Angoulême.* F. Génin.
2. *Nouvelles Lettres de Marguerite d'Angoulême.* F. Génin.
3. *Poésies et Correspondance Intime de François* 1*er.* Champolleon-Figeac.
4. *Lettres de Catherine de Médecis.* De la Ferrière.
5. *Journal de Louise de Savoie.*
6. *Correspondance Française de Jean Calvin.* Crottet.
7. *Correspondance des Réformateurs.* A. L. Herminjard.
8. *Livre de Dépenses* (1540–49) *de Marguerite d'Angoulême.* De la Ferrière.
9. *L'Héptameron de la Reine de Navarre.* Jacob.
10. *L'Héptameron de la Reine de Navarre.* Le Roux de Lincy.
11. *Le Myrouer de l'Âme Pêcheresse.*
12. *Les Marguerites de la Marguerite des Princesses.* Franck.
13. *Poésies de Clément Marot.* D'Héricault.
14. *Poésies de Mellin de Saint Gellais.* D'Héricault.
15. *Poésies d'Etienne Jodelle.* D'Héricault.
16. *Œuvres de Rabelais.* Louis Barre.
17. *Relations des Ambassadeurs Vénitiens. Documents inédits.*

Digitized by Google

18. *Négociations de la France dans le Levant. Documents inédits.*
19. *Mélanges Historiques. Documents inédits.*
20. *Captivité de François* 1*er. Documents inédits.*
21. *Récit d'un Bourgeois de Marseille.*
22. *Récit d'un Bourgeois de Paris.* Lalanne.
23. *Fleurange: Histoire des Choses Mémorables.* Petitot.
24. *La Très-joyeuse Histoire du Chevalier Bayard.* Petitot.
25. *Mémoires de Messire Martin du Bellay.* Petitot.
26. *Ogdoades de Messire Guillaume du Bellay.* Petitot.
27. *Oraison Funèbre de l'incomparable Marguerite,* par Charles de Ste. Marthe.
28. *Histoire Ecclésiastique des Églises Réformées.* Baum et Cunitz.
29. *Œuvres de Brantôme.*
30. *Vita di Benvenuto Cellini.*
31. *L'Histoire de l'Hérésie.* Florimond de Rémond.
32. *Histoire de Foix, Béarn, et Navarre.* Pierre Olhagaray.
33. *Histoire de Béarn et de Navarre.* Nicolas de Bordenave.
34. *Calendar of State Papers,* vols. viii. and ix.
35. *Relazione Venete,* vols. i., ii., and iv. Alberi.
36. *Papiers d'État du Cardinal Granvelle. Documents inédits.* Weiss.

II.—Critical and Historical.

37. *Histoire de France: Réforme, Renaissance.* Michelet.
38. *History of England,* vols. i.–v. Froude.
39. *Rivalité entre Charles Quint et François* 1*er.* F. Mignet.

Digitized by Google

40. *Histoire de François* 1*er*, vols. v., vi., and vii. F. Gaillard.
41. *History of England*, vols. iv. and v. Lingard.
42. *Captivité de François* 1*er*. M. Rey.
43. *Le XVIème. Siécle et les Valois*. De la Ferrière.
44. *Histoire de l'établissement du Protestantisme en France*. L. Aguesse.
45. *The Renaissance in France*. Mrs. Mark Pattison.
46. *Life of Marguerite d'Angoulême*. M. W. Freer.
47. *Marguerite d'Angoulême et la Renaissance*. Victor Luro.
48. *Marguerite de Navarre et la Réforme*. H. A. Blind.
49. *Life of Bernard Palissy*. H. Morley.
50. *Histoire de France*, vol. viii. Henry Martin.
51. *Le Panthéisme Populaire au Moyen-Âge*. Auguste Jundt.
52. *Dictionnaire Historique*. Bayle.
53. *Biographie Universelle*. Firmin Didot.

III.—Portraits.

54. French Portraits in the Louvre. *School of Clouet*.
55. French Portraits at Hampton Court. *School of Clouet*.
56. Tombeau de la Reine de Navarre, Portrait. *Denisot*.
57. Coins and Medals of Sixteenth Century in France. *British Museum*.
58. Collection of Drawings in British Museum. *François Clouet*.
59. Personnages Illustres d'après les Portraits de François Clouet. *Niel*.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.—Childhood and Marriage (1491–1515)	1
CHAPTER II.—The Young King and his Rivals (1515–1520)	12
CHAPTER III.—The Affair of Meaux (1520–1523)	28
CHAPTER IV.—Constable Bourbon (1521–1524) .	38
CHAPTER V.—Sequels (1524–1525) . . .	45
CHAPTER VI.—The Captivity (1525) . . .	53
CHAPTER VII.—The Queen of Navarre (1525–1530)	74
CHAPTER VIII.—Nérac in 1530	84
CHAPTER IX.—The Sorbonne (1529–1535) . .	91
CHAPTER X.—Changes (1536–1538) . . .	108
CHAPTER XI.—A False Step (1539–1540) . .	123
CHAPTER XII.—The League with Soliman (1541–1543)	133
CHAPTER XIII.—The Heptameron, I. (1544) .	140
CHAPTER XIV.—The Heptameron, II. (1544) .	162
CHAPTER XV.—Downfall (1544–1545) . .	181
CHAPTER XVI.—Nérac in 1545	199
CHAPTER XVII.—Death of the King (1545–1547)	206
CHAPTER XVIII.—The End (1547–1548) . .	215

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MARGARET OF ANGOULÊME,

QUEEN OF NAVARRE.

CHAPTER I.

(1491–1515.)

CHILDHOOD AND MARRIAGE.

When Louisa of Savoy, beautiful, accomplished, barely fifteen years old, was given in marriage to Charles of Orleans, Count of Angoulême, it can have seemed no brilliant alliance on her part. The bridegroom was twenty years older than the bride, of fallen fortunes, and banished from the Court of France. That he was a possible heir to the Crown can only have counted as a splendid piece of heraldry, for the young king, Charles VIII., was newly wedded to Anne of Brittany, and his sister's husband, the heir-presumptive, was a vigorous young man of nine-and-twenty, likely to live long and have many children.

These two young lives stood between the Crown and the Count of Angoulême. It was not likely that he, delicate, gentle, fastidious, should outlive them. But

Digitized by Google

the Count's position as a possible heir made him an honourable match, though poor, for the girlish Princess of Savoy. Her father sanctioned the marriage gladly. Louisa's mother was dead, and he had children by his second wife. He was willing to marry his elder daughter honourably and without expense. On her marriage he gave with her a dowry of 35,000 livres—a small sum, considering that her mother had been a very wealthy heiress. But Philip of Savoy, with several children to endow, and a throne ever threatened by the surrounding kingdoms, had many uses for his money. The Count of Angoulême, for his part, assigned the Castles of Cognac and Romorantin to Louisa, and these were to remain to her as dower-houses in the event of her widowhood. Finally, all affairs being settled, Charles of Orleans, in the year 1491, was married to his youthful bride.

The Count went with his wife to live on his property in Angoulême. From the French Court he was debarred by the King's displeasure, for the reason that long ago he had joined the rebellion of Brittany. It was no punishment to Charles to live a country life. His gentle and quiet tastes, his benevolence, his gift for organization, all were employed and satisfied in the orderly routine of managing a great property. He had his reward in peaceful years and in the loving devotion of his tenantry. But such a life might easily have wearied a beautiful child of fifteen, exceedingly accomplished, a princess, brilliant, and fond of power. There was, however, in Louisa's nature a passionate capacity for devotion. This, in fact, is the key-note of her life. She fell in love, deeply and all-sufficingly, with her courteous, elderly husband: the banishment in which he shone delighted her; the

Digitized by Google

delicate chivalry of his character won her passionate approval. At this age she must have been a beautiful girl, with aquiline features, in which the latent coarseness was as yet undeveloped, dark, with an ardent Italian air. She knew a little Latin, and was fond of quoting it; she was well and widely read in French, and could speak several modern languages; there were few better instructed princesses in Europe. Her manners at this time were gentle and submissive, for she had voluntarily bowed herself under the yoke of an impassioned reverence. The violent ambition of her later years was still unguessed and latent in her soul.

Charles and his bride spent the first year of their marriage in the Castle of Angoulême, and there, in the following spring, their eldest child was born. In the Journal in which, later on, Louisa noted the great events of her life, she thus records the date:—

"My daughter Margaret was born in the year 1492, the eleventh day of April, at two o'clock in the morning, that is to say, the tenth day, fourteen hours and ten minutes, counting after the fashion of the astronomers."

As the little girl grew out of babyhood, people noticed that her mother's aquiline features were softened in her face by the look and smile of her gentle father, and that in her character his delicate and benevolent nature qualified the love of learning and capacity for devotion which her mother gave her. More intense than he, more refined and unworldly than Louisa, the little Margaret displayed a singular and beautiful personality. The young Countess was very proud of her and, almost from her cradle, began to cultivate the sensitive intelligence of the child. But, while Margaret was still little more than a baby, a

Digitized by Google

more important personage appeared upon the scene, one who henceforth should be the very centre of existence both to Margaret and to her mother.

"Francis, by the grace of God, King of France, and my pacific Cæsar, took his first experience of earthly light at Congnac, about ten hours after noon, the twelfth day of September 1494."

So triumphantly runs Louisa's journal. But the next entry sobers all that joy :—

"The first day of January 1496 I lost my husband."

An intermittent fever, common and fatal in those days of imperfect drainage, carried off the Count of Angoulême at forty, and left Louisa a widow in her twentieth year. For some weeks it appeared as though her two little children might be left utterly desolate, for, broken down with long nursing and a most bitter sorrow, the young Countess fell seriously ill. She was, however, too young, too vigorous, to die of grief. She recovered, finding in her children sufficient motive for existence. Retiring to her dower-house of Romorantin, Louisa busied herself in training Margaret. This girl she intended to become the most accomplished princess of her age. Madame de Chatillon, a lady of great learning, rank, and virtue, was engaged as governess to the young princess, and scholars of note were employed to instruct her in Latin, in philosophy, and in divinity. But if Louisa cared so well for her daughter, yet more absolutely was she engrossed by the future of her infant son. Her passionate heart, left empty by her husband's death, gave harbour to an unrestrained ambition, and her dreams began early to fulfil themselves. On the 6th April 1498 the young King died childless, and his childless brother-in-law, Louis, Duke of Orleans, succeeded him, under the title of

Digitized by Google

Louis XII. These events made the little boy at Romorantin heir-presumptive to the throne of France.

But Louis was anxious to leave a nearer heir. He divorced his faithful, ugly wife, the crippled daughter of Louis XI., and espoused Anne of Brittany, the beautiful Queen Dowager, whom he had desired to marry in his early youth. Anne and Louisa were implacable at heart. The stern little Breton Queen was as obstinate as the Countess, but far more sedate: determined, ambitious, and secret. She had a great contempt for Louisa's violent aspirations; a very rigid Catholic, she looked with misliking on the free speech and wide reading of the young Countess of Angoulême. But King Louis was resolved to be friends with his handsome cousin and her children. It was, indeed, to Louisa's Castle of Romorantin that Anne repaired to await her first confinement. With what strenuous prayer and hope, and with what humiliating fear, that event was awaited, only those can understand who have sounded the deep, inexorable rivalry between these two women. On the 13th of October 1499 the child was born. It was a daughter, the Princess Claude of France. "*Elle fut née en ma maison,*" writes Louisa in her diary. From that moment she determined the little girl should marry her boy Francis, and not some powerful foreign prince, who might forcibly break the Salic law. Naturally Anne was of a contrary opinion.

The Queen was young, was of Louisa's own age, three-and-twenty. A son might be born to her to mock all Louisa's hopes and dreams. From this intense expectation neither one nor the other of these women was ever free. But the years went on, and no male child was given to Anne; then, one crucial morning, a

Digitized by Google

son was born, but, writes Louisa in her journal, with an almost savage triumph, "he could not retard the exaltation of my Cæsar, for he had no life." Sharp anxiety and goading ambition had so changed by this time the gentle wife of Charles of Angoulême.

Louisa brought up her son as befitted a king. Her castle of Romorantin was scarcely large enough to hold the court and retinue of the young heir of France, and for this purpose the beautiful palace of Amboise was assigned to her by the King. As years went on, Louis grew to regard the young Count of Angoulême as his heir, and, despite the bitter jealousy of Queen Anne, he loved the boy, and treated him with care and kindness. He created Francis Duke of Valois; he consulted the child's taste with fatherly foresight; and when his young cousin came to court, Louis had the royal park filled with deer and game, so that Francis might not be debarred from his favourite pleasure of the chase.

Meanwhile, at Amboise, Francis was educated with the greatest nobles of France. Of these boy-companions, five, in especial, were to become conspicuous in the history of his life. Gaston de Foix, the King's nephew, "the thunderbolt of Italy" as people learned to call him, who, ten years later, in the flower of his youth, should perish in the moment of victory on the desolate Ravenna marshes. The light-hearted Bonnivet, Margaret's too daring lover, killed at Pavia. The brilliant and gay Philippe Brion, Sieur de Chabot, so often favoured and disgraced by Francis in later years. And, a more potent influence, Anne de Montmorency, the determined, stern, narrow-hearted boy, on whom his godmother, the Breton Queen, seemed to have bestowed her pure and relentless nature with

Digitized by Google

her name. Lastly, the unfortunate Charles de Montpensier, the Bourbon cadet, whose passionate vindictive character and tragic Italian face betrayed the Gonzaga adventurer that doubled this French noble.

These boys were taught all things that befit young princes. Latin, courtly languages, hunting, the dance (music was as yet in embryo, a mere thrum of the lute or burr of the organ), jousting, tennis, tilting at the ring, fencing, and wrestling. At all their games there was one deeply interested looker on, one whom all strove to please, the Queen of the little court; this was Mademoiselle d'Angoulême.

At this time there was some talk of affiancing the little girl to the young Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry of England, eighth of the name. King Louis sent an embassy to the English court; Henry VII. despatched a special envoy to Paris; but though the English ambassador reported the little Princess "*très belle et fort saige de son aage*," nothing came of these negotiations. For Henry declared that though a daughter of Louis would be the alliance nearest to his heart, yet, while the King and Queen were still so young and vigorous, he could not consider Mademoiselle d'Angoulême as sister to the heir of France.

Nevertheless, with every day Francis became more evidently the heir, and at Plessis, on May 22nd, 1507, he married the little girl born at his mother's castle, in order to unite her inheritance of Brittany and Orleans with the crown. This was ample recognition, and yet the triumph of Louisa was not all sweetness, for we find her writing in her journal: "The 3rd August 1508, my son went from Amboise to live at court, and left me all alone."

Within the year the little Charles of Spain sent an

Digitized by Google

embassy to King Louis, requesting the hand of Mademoiselle d'Angoulême. This would have been a far more brilliant alliance than the English match, and Louisa would gladly have given her consent. But the King refused. Perhaps he thought it dangerous to wed a French princess with the natural rival of France; very probably Anne, who still counted on Charles for some yet unborn daughter of her own, persuaded him not to break her heart and grant this second triumph to her rival. The heir of Spain was dismissed, and Queen Anne selected a very different bridegroom, more suitable in years, but not at all in spirit. This was Charles of Alençon, first Prince of the Blood, a duke with power of life and death in his duchy, almost a petty sovereign. He was a handsome, dull, inefficient youth of twenty, without ideas or presence, and of a brooding and jealous temper. There was, however, no ground for rejecting the choice of the Queen, eager to humiliate her insatiable rival. The Duke of Alençon was an honourable match for Mademoiselle d'Angoulême. Descended from that Charles I. of Valois who was made Count of Alençon by his brother Philip the Fair, Monsieur d'Alençon came of a house which for two centuries had been glorious and quasi-royal. And yet he was stupid and mean of spirit; a sad mate for the gay, brilliant, mystical girl he was to marry, whose tender radiance and smile of wistful rapture deserved a happier destiny. It was also a profound disappointment to Louisa that, having refused the King of Spain, her pearl of princesses should be given to a simple duke. Yet this came to pass—Margaret obediently suffering her dismal fate. So, for a while, mother and children were divided. Francis, living in impatient restraint at court; Louisa,

Digitized by Google

filling her craving heart with infinite ambitions in her childless castle at Cognac; Margaret, unhappy, dispirited, drooping in her husband's palace at Alençon, far from the gaiety, the cultured intercourse, the love and happiness to which she had been accustomed all her life.

Margaret was now seventeen years old. She was not beautiful, but very charming. She was tall, graceful of carriage, slim and delicate in air. Her thick blonde hair was hidden away under a black coif; and this fashion gave a certain severity to her long pale face. The eyes, blue and expressive, smiled sweetly under arching brows. Her nose was the long, large nose of Francis, but more delicate and irregular in her, with a sort of ripple in it. She had a little, neatly rounded chin, and a very sweet mouth, with a wistful pathetic smile, well knowing the way "*dire Nenny avec un doux sourire.*" Yet, despite her pensive countenance, she was—we have her word for it—"*de moult joyeuse vie, quoique toutefois femme de bien.*"

At Alençon, alas! there was no joyous life. The Duke, gloomy, jealous, mediocre, interested merely in the details of his estate, was a respectable youth, but not the man to make a Margaret happy. She pursued her studies as the one means of escape from this irksome existence. Madame de Chatillon, her governess, had accompanied the young Duchess as first Lady of Honour. Under her direction, doubtless, Margaret began to give more and more of her attention to her favourite study of Divinity. Her mystical, indefinite mind was attracted towards religious speculation, and Madame de Chatillon was well acquainted with the New Ideas then already beginning to stir the soul

Digitized by Google

of France. This lady was, in later years, suspected of Lutheranism, and it was said that she had secretly married the innovating Cardinal du Bellay. But as yet Lutheranism did not exist. She and her pupil, however, had gone forth to seek it.

Meanwhile, Louisa was perplexed with more earthly anxieties. In 1510 the nation became aware that a new heir might be expected to the Crown of France. These were months of exultation to Queen Anne, while Louisa understood how terribly all her ambitions would be overthrown should a royal prince be born. In October a little girl came into the world: Madame Renée de France. Then for a moment the anxiety of Louisa was appeased. But a worse trial was in store. The Queen never recovered that disappointment. Three years afterwards she died; and Louisa discovered that the death of her enemy had brought a new and terrible evil upon her. Nine months after the death of Anne, the King, who had mourned her with little less than frenzy, married Mary, the beautiful young sister of the English King. Louisa's hatred for this new rival, and her contempt for the King, are manifest even in the meagre lines of her diary.

"The 22nd September, King Louis XII., very old and feeble (*fort antique et debile*), went out of Paris to meet his young wife Queen Mary.

"The 9th October, was held the amorous wedding of Louis, King of France, and Mary of England.

"The 3rd day of November 1514, before eleven o'clock, I arrived at Paris, and the self-same day, without resting, I was advised to go and salute Queen Mary at Saint Denis, and I left Paris at three o'clock with a great number of gentlemen.

"The 5th of November 1514, Queen Mary was

Digitized by Google

crowned at Saint Denis, and the sixth day made her entry into Paris."

Then the journal no longer chronicles the triumphs of a rival.

"The first day of November 1515, my son was King of France."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

(1515–1520.)

THE YOUNG KING AND HIS RIVALS.

WHILE the young Queen sat in her chamber, reading her missal, submitting to her mother-in-law, and embroidering red silken counterpanes, the Duchess of Alençon queened it over the court of France, the brilliant Egeria of half-a-dozen poets. For Claude, although the wife and daughter of a king, was none the less a quiet, narrow-chested girl, fifteen years old, gentle, pious, and awkward, with neat, pure features and smooth-braided hair that had no special charm or grace. Francis, with his ideas of splendour and chivalry, desired a different queen for his sumptuous court. And her he found in Margaret, a woman then of three-and-twenty, both learned and witty, and with a charm more attractive than beauty in her slender carriage and tender smile—Margaret, young, *de moult joyeuse vie, et la meilleure compagnie possible.* Margaret was virtually the Queen of France.

Hers was a dangerous although an honourable position. She was young, and, under the spell of that sweet pale face, that abundant soft blonde hair, her brother's courtiers called her the most beautiful of

Digitized by Google

women. She was unhappily married, and possessed neither love nor esteem for her husband. She ruled without scruple the laxest court of Europe. Yet, singular among the women of that court, the Duchess of Alençon never had a lover.

The virtue of the young Princess, gay as she seemed, was quite secure. She looked on all her would-be lovers with a sweet, remote ironical compassion, and turned away to seek her books again. She had an almost pedantic love of learning; theology, grammar, classics, romances, she gave them each a share of the curiosity and interest with which she envisaged life. All these tastes and qualities helped to secure her virtue; but even greater than they as a safeguard we must place her absolute, unrivalled devotion to her brother.

It was the fashion then at court for people of quality to select a motto or device expressing their personality. Duchess Margaret was clever at making these posies; she supplied them to her brother, to his mistress, to half-a-dozen others. For herself, she selected a sunflower turning to the sun, and underneath she wrote, "*Non inferiora secutus.*" The phrase is exact; no lower light did she ever follow, no wandering glory led her from the worship of that sun of hers. Through all history, I think, we never come again upon a devotion sustained so long and at so high a pitch as this of Margaret d'Angoulême for her brother. And this idolatry demanded many sacrifices. She was to offer it her life and her constant service, the interests of her husband, the happiness of her child. She offered it her judgment, almost her conscience. And for his sake, in her middle age, already weary of the world, she should forsake the mystical meditation in which she

Digitized by Google

delighted, to compose the *Heptameron* to please him in his illness.

Louisa of Savoy was scarcely less devoted. As great a love and ambition filled her heart, but was met and thwarted there by other passions, by intenser personal cravings. She was not like Margaret, a sunflower, seeing only one object, turning only to that. She was a passionate, personal, violent woman—eager for love, eager for money, eager for power, yet subordinating these intense desires to her motherly ambition. Her passion was as strong as Margaret's devotion. Both these women lived only for the glory of Francis. Let us see of what stuff this idol was made.

There is, I believe, no good portrait of Francis in his youthful manhood. The face so familiar to us is of a later date: a dreadful face, with its sly and carnal look, the long coarse nose, and full voluptuous mouth. It seems as if some pressure of blood on the brain weighed down the eyelids over those small and narrow eyes, and inflamed those florid cheeks, over which the coarse dark hair falls down. A dreadful face truly—apoplectic, sensual, indifferent, cunning. But, from the frequent contemporary representations of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, we can believe that in 1520 the King looked different from this. Still slender, tall, and elegant in figure, he rode his horse gracefully, and was first in every pastime. His long face, with the small eyes, is not yet swollen and reddened by indulgence and disease. It has, indeed, a gentle, benevolent, and royal expression; an air of kind knightliness: and this is the pose which Francis affected. He was to be the Amadis of kings. He was brave to folly, ideally rash in love and in war; he was fantastically honourable. A story in the *Heptameron* relates how, having disco-

Digitized by Google

vered in his court a stranger who had conspired to murder him, Francis gave a great hunt, and, leading the traitor aside to a lonely glade, he offered to cross swords with him in fair fight, and then sent him pardoned away. Such stories as these captivated the popular imagination; and the splendid court of Francis, his love of art, his taste in architecture, his considerable skill in poetry, all this completed the national enchantment; for France, notwithstanding her love of thrift, has ever demanded glory or magnificence from her rulers. Also the person of the King was widely known. His habit of traversing the country through and through, hunting, pleasuring, inspecting frontiers, made all men acquainted with their monarch. And the nation, delighted with his showy chivalry, found their Prince a picturesque object for devotion.

But woe to those who expected more solid qualities from Francis. Fickle and variable as he was versatile, he veered from point to point with every wind. At bottom a profoundly indifferent nature, he cared only for the convenience of the moment. He accepted devotion gracefully, but it did not occur to him to repay it. His confidence was the one reward he bestowed on those who gave their lives to him; and this went far with the women who adored him. It gave them an exquisite sense of participation in his interests. He kept his grateful sister all her life travelling from province to province *en commis-voyageur de royauté.* He left half the cares of his country to his mother. But woe to any who, in her hour of need, expected to receive a like aid or service from the King. The Queen of Navarre never got her kingdom from him. Madame de Chateaubriand, in

Digitized by Google

her dreadful prison guarded by her jealous and ferocious husband, was left to die without a word. A certain Louise de Crevecœur discovered too late the heartlessness of her lover. "Do you not know?" she writes, "that those in prison make use of poison; my children and I eat nothing without I find an antidote for our food. It is for my love of you that they hurt me thus; and you endure it. This is sharper to me than the pain that I suffer." How terrible a light this chance-found letter casts on the figure of the gay, handsome, brave young Amadis who was at this time the hero of Europe. "It is for my love of you that they hurt me thus; and you endure it!" From many an honest servant of Francis this cry must have gone up; for neither gratitude nor pity beat under that dinted breast-plate of his. Yet, after all these years, knowing the end, and despite our great contempt, we feel the glamour that surrounds the figure of this ardent young poet and soldier, this brilliant hero of the Renaissance. And how much more did not his radiance blind the women who adored him as their hero and their king!

"*Scrivere a Luisa di Savoia è come scrivere alla stessa Trinità.*" So wrote the witty, blasphemous Cardinal Bibbiena. And it was true. Francis repaid the love and service of his worshippers by his confidence. Louisa and Margaret were scarcely less powerful than himself. On all political questions he consulted these contrasted minds: the violent, autocratic Louisa, and Margaret the modest and humane. Unconsciously to themselves, these different natures paralysed each other; and the policy of Francis is a brilliant tissue of inconsistencies, uncertainties, and sudden disasters.

Francis, though so newly King of France, did not

Digitized by Google

forget that by inheritance he was, also, through his descent from Valentina Visconti, hereditary Duke of Milan. The Sforzas, the successful usurpers, claimed possession as nine points of the law, and Maximilian the Emperor demanded Milan by right of his overlordship. Each was equally resolved to possess in that city the key of Italy. But these words, *Milan, Italy,* meant more to Francis than a mere political position. To his intensely artistic temperament, a corner of Italy was more precious than the whole of France. Milan to him meant beauty, poetry; gardened villas in which to pass a soft abandoned leisure; women more fair than those of his kingdom; churches and palaces which he, the great builder, knew how to value; lax and subtle Lombard art. From the first days to the last of his life the thought of Milan haunted him like a passion, and to the shadow of unpossessed Italy he constantly sacrificed his substantial realm of France. His first hazard ended in success, and made the name of the little town of Marignano a word to conjure with in France. No sooner was his reign begun, than with Lautrec and with Bayard, with the chivalry of France, the young King resolved to conquer his longed-for inheritance. He sent Bayard in advance with La Palice. No sooner did they set foot in Piedmont than they took prisoner Prospero Colonna, the general of the Swiss in the pay of Maximilian Sforza. When this news reached Francis, who was at Lyons with his mother, his sister, and his wife, nothing could restrain him from marching into Italy. He sent his wife, who was near her confinement, with Louisa and Margaret, to the familiar palace of Amboise. He left Louisa—"Madame" as she was now styled—Regent of France, bade them

Digitized by Google

farewell, and soon was in the mountains. He arrived in Lombardy in time to follow up the successes of Bayard and La Palice. The Swiss, rumoured invincible, had gathered in large reinforcements to defend Milan. Near Marignano the French under Francis encountered them. "It was," says General Trivulzio, "a battle of giants. They fought all night."

"The 13th of September, which was Thursday, 1515," writes the proud mother in her journal, "my son vanquished and defeated the Swiss near Milan; the battle began at five hours after noon; it lasted all the night and the morrow until eleven o'clock in the morning; and this very day I left Amboise to go on foot to Nostre Dame des Fontaines, to commend to her that which I love more than myself. It is my son, glorious and triumphant Cæsar, subjugator of the Helvetians.

"Sunday, the 14th of October, of the year 1515, Maximilian, son of the late Louis Sforza, was besieged in the Castle of Milan by the French, and made a conditional surrender to my son.

"The 14th of December 1515 my son took the oath of peace with the King of England——."

Thus, a year after his accession, we find Francis a conqueror in Italy, at peace with the Great Powers, adored and glorified in France; so begins his reign.

There were in Europe at this time two other sovereigns, young and rich, though without the brilliant elegance of the French monarch. Europe lay, in fact, at the feet of these three youths, two of them caring for little else but war as a chivalrous game, and peace as magnificent leisure; while the third was equally uninspired by public spirit, being engrossed already with the dreams of a subtle and tremendous ambition.

Digitized by Google

In 1519 the old Emperor Maximilian died, and each of these three kings stood forward to contest the Empire.

The eldest of them was Henry of England, eighth of the name. He was twenty-eight years of age, handsome, tall, blond, and ruddy. "His features," says Lodovico Falier, "are not merely beautiful—they are angelic." Robust in figure, he did not yet show signs of the extravagant corpulence of his middle age. He was vigorous and active in all sports, vain, jealous, arrogant, but as yet the arrogance seemed only a bluff English sort of dignity. Handsome, rich, and valiant as he was, Henry had not much chance for the empire. His kingdom was not a large enough state. "No one was on the side of the King of England," says Fleurange.

The real rival of Francis was Charles of Austria, King of Spain. These two were rivals, not only for the empire, but for Burgundy, for Milan, for Navarre, and for the Netherlands. They were nearly equal in power, for, while the domain of Charles was the vaster, that of Francis was more homogeneous and more compact. In temperament as different as in interests, each was born to be the antagonist of the other.

Charles was the youngest of the three. Born in 1500, he was nineteen years old at the time of the death of his grandfather. In the previous year, on the decease of his mother's father, Ferdinand, he had succeeded to the crown of Spain, for, though his mother was recognised as Queen, she was unfit to govern. She was that poor mad Queen of Arragon, who mourned so tragically the brutal Austrian husband who ill-used her. Charles was brought up far from the fantastic neighbourhood of his mother. He and

Digitized by Google

his sister were given into the care of his father's sister, the politic Margaret of Austria, who educated them in the Netherlands, where she ruled as Maximilian's governor. But all her care and healthy influence could not prevent Charles from inheriting the sombre temperament of Juana. The man who, when Emperor of half the world, should turn monk and dwell in the Escurial, was as a boy without brilliance, without activity, without fire; a pale, taciturn, studious lad, he seemed no formidable rival. "*Un quidam certain petit roi*," said the French, and laughed in their sleeves. They did not notice his hungry eyes, his powerful chin; they did not see the subtlety and power of combination which this pious, quiet lad inherited from Ferdinand and Isabel—the rare outbursts of determined energy which showed him the grandson of the fiery Max. He was, in truth, a most formidable adversary.

1519 So it appeared when, in 151[illegible], the three Kings, as candidates for the Empire, sent from France, from Spain, from England, their delegates to Frankfort. "As many were for the King of France as for the Catholic King," says Fleurange, "but not one for the King of England. And the day came at last when the election must be made, when it was cried aloud in the great Church of Frankfort, 'Charles, Catholic King, elected Emperor!' And this being done gave great joy to those who wished well to the Catholic King, and great mourning to them who were for the King of France, and they were vexed and bewildered, for they had spent in vain the moneys they once had."

Francis had lost the chance on which he had surely reckoned. He never forgave his rival. On

Digitized by Google

the other hand, he looked for help and friendship to Henry of England. It was natural that the two defeated candidates should band themselves together against the winner. Francis was sincerely attracted to Henry. Friendship, no less than policy, counselled him to make this tall, vigorous, blond young Saxon his ally. But Henry, it would appear, had never much reliance on his brilliant neighbour. He had the inbred natural English mistrust of a French jackanapes, and, in this special case, it did as well as penetration. He was jealous of Francis's success in sport, in love, in war, and, while the French King thought he was winning Henry by his grace and his vivacity, he was really only fostering the blind antagonism of Henry, only feeding his jealousy, and his dislike to feel himself inferior. Moreover, though it was certainly advantageous for France—always more or less at war with the Empire—to make a firm alliance with England, England could choose between France and Austria; and England, with her laden ships sailing ever to and from the port of Antwerp—commercial, industrious England might naturally choose the power which ruled the Netherlands.

In the treaty of 1515 between France and England, there stood a clause providing that the two kings should meet each other in personal interview at some place on the confines of their dominions, somewhere between French Ardres and English Calais.

At last, in 1520, this friendly encounter was finally arranged. France and England half ruined their resources for each to shine once in the eyes of the other. During three weeks the jousting and revelling went on; for three weeks Francis tried all his graces on his rival, hoping to win his trust, and gaining instead

Digitized by Google

his deadly jealousy. The whole court of either country was present on the field, "All clinquant, all in gold, like heathen gods." The two sad neglected queens encountered there, and there Henry met in the French camp Margaret's beautiful English maid of honour, the black-eyed, slim Anne Boleyn. There met two rivals no less potent than their masters: Wolsey of Canterbury, with his retinue of colossals, and Charles de Montpensier, Constable Bourbon, bearing in his hand the sword of France. Henry of England looked on the Constable, noted the tragic face, wedged like a knife in the hilt between the black masses of his hair, and said to Francis: "Were he my servant, I would cut off his head!" Had Francis taken this advice, he had not paid too dear for the Field of the Cloth of Gold.

But no end, none, did reward that vast expense. Henry would give no promise of alliance, and when the splendid camps were struck, and the French court were journeying home to Paris, Francis was overtaken by the news that Henry had gone to meet the Emperor at Wael. Without flourish or display the secret Charles had gained his ends. In a plain soldier's tent he arranged his business with England. Almost directly after, war was declared between France and the Empire, on the vexed questions of Milan and Navarre. England remained neutral for the nonce; but it was reported that Henry would bring forward his claim to the crown of France when Charles invaded Burgundy. So, in wars and rumours of wars, ended the tourneys of the Field of Gold.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

(1520–1523.)

THE AFFAIR OF MEAUX.

The useless magnificence of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, had exhausted the treasury of France, while Charles, without wasting a sou, had obtained a practical interview with Henry. The Emperor was sure of, at least, the neutrality of England; he was rich and ready for war. Francis, on the other hand, had to borrow money from the Florentines, and had secured no aid from England. On the contrary, the whole of the north of France was seized by an intermittent panic; in many a bank of clouds men saw an English fleet coming to lay waste and ravage. And this open unprotected, impoverished northern country was left without armies, almost without garrisons. For all the scanty soldiery of France was drawn away to the south, to fight in Navarre and to defend imperilled Milan.

War surprised Francis without men or money. The promised Florentine loan was never paid; nothing remained but to tax the suffering country. Tax after

Digitized by Google

tax was levied; unbeneficed priests were rated as laymen. Benefices were bought and sold; still money enough was not collected. Then the King took down the great silver grating, costing six thousand seven hundred marks, which Louis XI. had placed at the tomb of St. Martin. Once this would have been loudly clamoured against as sacrilege, but now men were too miserable to clamour.

Or, if they murmured, if they said strange things and dreamed strange dreams; if starved, afraid, abandoned, they made for their refuge a faith, uncredited and unknown: their dim voices were not heard in the noisy clangour and splendour of sixteenth-century warfare.

For in the towns of Picardy and Normandy, the quiet artisans looked and noticed, then pondered many things in their hearts. The useless glory of the rich, the squalor of the poor, the corruption, simony, and vile immorality of the Church; death near; desertion present; the world bitter, vague, unreal. Over their looms the weavers bent and dreamed; the smiths and armourers hammered strange thoughts into their iron; the very clergy read new meanings in their missals. A great idea had stirred in the silent womb of the quiet, industrial, abandoned North of France; a thought continually born, dead, born again into the world: God is all, the rest is nothing.

"In the year 1520," says the Bourgeois of Paris, "there arose in the duchy of Saxony, in Germany, a heretic doctor of theology, named Martin Luther, who said many things against the power of the Pope . . . and wrote several books, which were printed and published through all the cities of Germany and throughout the kingdom of France . . . and in 1521

Digitized by Google

there was a great famine, so that in Paris no corn and no bread were to be found in all the town for any price; and throughout the land of Normandy a still greater famine and scarcity of corn and of bread, so that ten bushels of wheat sold for ten livres. . . . And it must be noted that the greater part of the town of Meaux was infected by the doctrines of Luther."

Meaux was a town of weavers, a great industrial centre. Close enough to Paris to share the intellectual activity, the fever of speculation, which signalised Paris from the time of Duns Scotus to the time of Vatable, Meaux was yet aloof, apart; removed from the envies and glories of the court, from the hurry and business of the capital. It was a town of priests and weavers. From the episcopal palace there, a mild elderly bishop swayed the quiet city. This man, Guillaume Briçonnet, a gentle, humane, dreamy scholar, ex-man-of-the-world, garrulous and mystical, had gathered about him the most thoughtful of the French clergy. Under him Meaux remained a serene oasis among the spreading cupidity and corruption of the Church. The pious, the wise, the speculative spirits of France were attracted to that placid neighbourhood; the great Lefebvre d'Étaples, Gérard Roussel, Michel d'Arande, settled there. Then, all at once this humane and idealistic clergy—this starved, fiery, mystical population of weavers and artisans, was seized with a sudden panic: Charles was besieging Mézières. Hunger, desertion, fearful ravage, hovered over all alike. The world was proved an impracticable, an intolerable place of trial. There was nothing to comfort men, saving to build a refuge unseen and secure, a land that no rude soldiery could trample

Digitized by Google

under foot, a haven where all were welcome. The same spirit breathed upon clergy and populace. With interests already divorced from the material world (celibate and scholarly, underfed and sedentary visionaries), they threw themselves, heart and soul, upon the hope of God. In a few months the mysticism of Meaux was an organic and progressive movement. From the bishop to the lowest journeyman weaver, in every class, men spoke the same strange dreamy words, foretold the same necessary purification, turned with the same energy to the new-discovered scriptures, quoted alike the wonderful commentaries of Lefebvre d'Étaples (1512–1522) which began the great Reformation in Europe.

Guillaume Briçonnet, Bishop of Meaux, a vague and holy nature, was not without the vanity of the mystic. A man of sincere sympathy, sincere emotions, his lack of precision in feeling and thinking condemned him to play an insincere part. He did not inquire of himself whether he really felt, to the same extent of daring and suffering, the intense faith that stirred the awakened clergy, the miserable populace of Meaux. He sympathised with them; he was their bishop. It seemed right to him to stand in the front of their movement, to be their man of God. So we find grouped below this gentle mediocre bishop, with his incomprehensible flow of mystical garrulity, men of ardent and incisive faith like Lefebvre d'Étaples, and Gérard Roussel, Guillaume Farel, Michel d'Arande, all the heroes of the French Reformation. For a long time Briçonnet de Meaux, who called these great men to shelter in his diocese, appeared a holier and wiser man than they.

It was to this Man of God that the Duchess Mar-

Digitized by Google

garet wrote when war and disaster suddenly confronted her with the problems of existence. She knew him, it would seem, only by repute; but in sore distress of soul she sought his aid, as suffering women of old sought the help of a greater Reformer. Margaret's soul had been born in the trouble and sorrow with which she learned that her brother's kingdom was menaced; her brother's life in danger; his safety and honour trusted (O haunting, unspeakable terror!) to the shallow mediocrity of her own husband. For Charles of Alençon was to lead the vanguard of the war. The brilliant, accomplished, joyous young princess was suddenly made into something more than this. "I must now meddle with many things which may well make me afraid," so she writes to Briçonnet, craving from the unknown the sympathy, the aid, she could not find in the familiar.

How should they guide her now, these Bourbons and Bonnivets, wholly given to the world; these poets and scholars, Marots and Budés, intent on Prosody and Grammar? No; her long studies in theology, her conversations with Madame de Chatillon, had taught her to look for other consolations. And she was sorely in need of help and friendship. This war, which heaped upon her so many fearful doubts and troubles, took from her at the same moment all her support—the brother she adored, the husband she had grown to regard with friendly acquiescence—and, taking her kinsmen and acquaintance, took also the sweet companion of her early womanhood, the tender and spiritual Philiberta of Savoy, her mother's young half-sister. So, looking on the future with miserable eyes, aghast, sick at heart, Margaret wrote to the far-famed Man of Meaux, and begged him to send

Digitized by Google

her, for comfort, his chaplain, the learned Michel d'Arande :—

"MONSIEUR DE MEAUX, "June 1521.

"Knowing there is but one thing needful, I have recourse to you, to beseech you, in God's name, to deign by prayer to make yourself the means that He may please to lead M. d'Alençon according to His holy will. For, by the King's command, M. d'Alençon departs as lieutenant-general of the army, which, I misdoubt me, will not return without war. And, since peace and victory are in His hand, and thinking that you wish well, not only to the public good of the kingdom, but also to my husband and to me, I employ you in my affairs, and demand of you spiritual service; for I must needs meddle with many things which well may make me afraid. And again, to-morrow my aunt of Nemours leaves us for Savoy. Wherefore I recommend her and myself to you, and pray you, if you think this a fit season, to let Master Michael depart on a journey hither; it would be a consolation, which I only desire for the glory of God, leaving it to your discretion and to his.

"La toute vostre,

"MARGUERITE."

Thus, in this naive, earnest appeal for aid, begins the strange correspondence of Briçonnet and Margaret—a correspondence eight hundred pages long; fantastic, mystical, bewildering, beyond belief. It is difficult to comprehend the consolation which Margaret found in this interchange of metaphors.

"I share my cake with you!" she cries, telling the good bishop of her trouble; and Briçonnet forthwith

Digitized by Google

responds: "Ah! madame, understand that there is in this world a cake of tribulations for you to share with your useless son, made from scattered tares, ground in the mill of sorrow, kneaded with cold water in the trough of infidel and disobedient presumption, baked in the furnace of self-love, of which the eating has been a fig poisoning the architects and their posterity, until the unleavened meal has been put in the cask of human nature." And, again, in answer to some appeal of hers he declares his own unworthiness in still more mystic and astounding fashion: "Who is deserted, is abysmed in the desert; seeking the desert and not finding it; and, finding it, is yet the more bewildered; and a poor guide is he to guide another out of the desert, and to lead another into the desert desired. The desert starves him with mortiferous hunger, although he be full to the eyes; goading his desire but to satisfy it and impoverish it with poverty." Margaret at length is herself in fault. This last message is too hard for her. She beseeches Briçonnet to speak more plainly in a letter which pathetically endeavours to copy his own extraordinary style. "Demetaphorise yourself," she entreats him. "The poor wanderer cannot understand the good which is in the desert, for lack of knowing that she is deserted. Prithee, for kindness' sake, run not so swiftly through the desert that she cannot follow you . . . in order that the abyss invoked by the abyss may whelm in its abysm the poor wanderer Margaret." But Briçonnet cannot refrain from pursuing so fructiferous a metaphor as that which the last sentence of the Duchess offers. He replies at once, without demetaphorising: "The abyss which prevents all abysses, which in saving from the abyss whelms in the abyss

Digitized by Google

without whelming or spoiling [*en le desabysmant l'abysmer en l'abysme sans l'abysmer*], which abyss is the bottomless bottom of things, the way of the wanderers, without road or path," &c.

In this gallimaufry of absurdities it is difficult to catch the allusion to the mystical love of God, which absorbs all thought, feeling, envy, and leaves the soul absolutely devoid of personal existence, the body quite without desire or sensation. This longed-for death-in-life is the bottomless bottom of things, and we comprehend that a thought so unthinkable could not well be conveyed in precise and reasoned language. We remember that such mystical speculation, couched in clear and logical terms (as in the writings of Master Eckhart) becomes merely Negation, or, at most, Agnosticism. And we are inclined to set aside Briçonnet as a worthy dreamer, not quite sure of that he dreams. But, on a more careful reading, we begin to wonder if this involved and intricate style be not merely a means to set the suspicious off the scent of heresy and treason. "Blow with your breath often upon the fire divine," writes Margaret to him, "set alight the wood that is still green." And he replies: "The true fire which since long has been lodged in your heart, in that of the King and Madame, by grace the greatest and most abundant that I can conceive, I know not if this fire has been covered and slackened, I will not say put out, for God in his goodness has not yet abandoned you. But ask you each in your heart if you have let the fire burn up according to the given grace. I fear you have procrastinated; I fear you have deferred. . . . But I will pray Him to light such a fire in your hearts, to wound them and pierce with such unbearable love, that from you three may issue

Digitized by Google

a flame, burning and setting alight the remainder of your realm."

So we perceive, behind this mask of metaphors, a great and tangible effort: the endeavour to convert the Royal Family of France to the new ideas, to the wish for Reform. Margaret, herself an eager proselyte, throws herself ardently into the scheme. Her frequent letters to Briçonnet are chiefly concerned with this supreme topic. During the siege of Mézières she brings her mother to Meaux, where they spent the winter; and on their departure Margaret does not relax her efforts. "Madame has begun to read in the Holy Scriptures. You know the confidence that she and the King place in you." And Lefebvre writes to rejoice with her in the progress of the good work. "The King and Madame," writes Margaret, "are quite decided to let it be made known that the truth of God is no heresy." Indeed, at that time, when Protestantism as a Church in revolt did not as yet exist, when Lutheranism was the most cultured fashion of the age, it appeared faintly possible that Francis, the Father of Letters, might be brought to favour the opinions professed by the most learned, the most intellectually brilliant scholars of Europe. But Margaret, in this matter, did not understand the temper of Francis and of her mother. Lax and frivolous in regard to the spiritual importance of Catholicism, they believed it, none the less, a necessity of good conduct; that vast hierarchy appeared to them as a temporal force, in which all government and authority was rooted. Louisa and Francis were not of the pious. "I have canonized Francis de Paule—at least I paid the tax!" cries Louisa, and she makes sport of a "Fricassee of Abbeys" which was served

Digitized by Google

wi'on the death of a certain prelate. Neither she nor her son were in awe of the Church, of their faith, of their Deity even. But they had an immense reverence for the temporal authority of Rome. "Any other religion would prejudice my estate," says Francis; and in this opinion, adds Brantôme, King Soliman perfectly agreed. This quoting of the Grand Turk, the Antichrist himself, as to the importance of the Catholic Church, proves exactly how much and for what reasons the Court of France respected it. Heresy as an opinion was perfectly in accord with the King's liberal taste; but heresy as an agent, as a factor, must be put down with fire and sword. Gradually Briçonnet apprehended this fact; and, being an excessively timid and hesitating nature, he bitterly regretted having gone too far. In sore distress of mind he wrote to Margaret—this Briçonnet who had so sternly admonished her for procrastination—"*Let it please you to slacken the fire for some time.* The wood you wish to burn is so green that it will put out the fire; and we counsel you (for several reasons, of which I hope to tell you the rest some day) to leave it alone; if you do not wish to quite extinguish both the brand as well as the surplus which desires to burn and to enflame others." But Margaret was too deeply in earnest to hesitate; she never had learned to be afraid. Her sanguine temperament had no doubt of success; and she seemed in a fair way to succeed. Madame had read St. Paul, from curiosity and for amusement; her daughter already made sure of her conversion. "My sister-in-law, my dear sister, is quite of our opinion," she writes to Briçonnet. This may have been Madame de Vendôme (the other grandmother of Henri IV.,) but I am inclined to

Digitized by Google

believe that Margaret found her first convert in the good, stolid, gentle Queen Claude. Such success was followed up, for Margaret did not heed her correspondent's timid expostulations. The misery of the time, the ever-increasing disasters, inclined all minds to religious enthusiasm. Milan was lost as easily as gained; Navarre, conquered in a fortnight, was taken from the King as quickly. Charles was laying siege to Mézières. Henry was expected at Calais; enemies were all round, and hunger in the midst.

Among such conditions the movement spread and grew. In her intrepid faith Margaret conceived the reformation of the entire duchies of Alençon and Berry. But she found difficulties in her path. The secrecy that must needs be kept, the lack of adequate helpers, the denseness of the people, all retarded the work which she considered *la salut des âmes*, the salvation of souls. She writes to Briçonnet, in September 1522, complaining that Michel d'Arande had had to leave too soon:—"Have pity on the country where he had promised to stay for some time, and which is so deprived of men of his kind that (to subsidise my duty left undone neither through absence or negligence) I had prayed him to succour the poor sheep there. . . . The surety of the porter and some little cowardice of soul prevent me from writing more." A worse trouble soon came, in the declared enmity of the Archbishop of Bourges. Margaret possessed absolute temporal control in the duchy of Berri, given her by Francis in 1517; she administered justice there even as in Alençon. But she was powerless against the Church. And now the Archbishop of Bourges threatened Michel d'Arande with imprison-

Digitized by Google

ment for life, interdicted him the pulpit, and fulminated excommunication against his hearers.

For the Church, at first amused, careless, curious, became alarmed and angry at the extent of this heresy. The Diet of Worms (1521) signalised the importance of Luther; and the orthodox French party, the clericals, the Sorbonne or Faculty of Theology, became aware that they, too, had a nest of Lutherans in their midst. There was talk of burning and of branding. A formal censure of the new ideas was pronounced by the Sorbonne: "One should employ rather flames than arguments against the arrogance of Luther," ran the text. And before the Church of Nôtre Dame de Paris the writings of Luther were burned to ashes, as a warning to his followers. The propositions of Luther were condemned one by one; and none more heartily than that which maintained that the burning of heretics was contrary to the teaching of the Gospel. Lefebvre d'Étaples was threatened with the stake. Then a descent was made upon the town of Meaux, well-known as the head-quarters of the new ideas. Farel, Mazurier, Lefebvre, and many others were obliged to flee for their lives. Others were made prisoners in the dungeons of the Sorbonne. And now a terrible choice was left for the gentle, cultured, timid Briçonnet. His turn would assuredly come next. He trembled, this prophet who had in him something of the mystic's insincerity, and all the sensitive versatility of the dilettante. In face of exile, captivity, torture, the stake, his presence of mind utterly failed him, and the man of God was found, after all, a weak, temporising, amiable ecclesiastic. For the sake of a theory he could not betray his order, sacrifice his liberty, his life. So, on the

Digitized by Google

15th October 1523 he issued a decree against those who, *abusing the gospels*, deny purgatory and the saints; on the 13th of December he preached against the "Lutheran pest." He joined himself with the Sorbonne against his former flock; launching out decrees of exile and condemnation like any Magister of Paris. No doubt he argued to himself that where he counselled flight, another would have lit the stake. But his apostasy caused him much hatred, as may be imagined. "This Bishop Briçonnet," says Antoine Froment, "fearing to lose his Bishopric and his life, turned his coat and became a persecutor of those whom formerly he had instructed. . . . . Soon after this miserable bishop, haunted by remorse, resigned his see and died of despair: a marvellous example of the horrible judgment of God against those who persecute the truth, having known it." This bitter tone, this acrimonious arrangement of simple facts (for Briçonnet died quietly enough, and maintained to the last his character of the enlightened man of culture), is common to all the Lutheran historians of the time. By the Catholics, also, he was regarded with suspicion and dislike. Already, some months before, Louisa of Savoy wrote in her diary: "By the grace of the Holy Ghost my son and I began to recognise the hypocrites white, black, grey, smoke-coloured, and of every hue, from which God in His infinite clemency has seen fit to preserve us." These hypocrites, we can have no doubt, were her pious neighbours of Meaux; Briçonnet, her correspondent; Lefebvre, who sent her the Epistles of St. Paul; Master Michael, her chaplain: all Lutherans at heart. Louisa never pardoned this attempt upon her faith; and Briçonnet, disdained by the reformers whom he had betrayed, was no less himself an inno-

Digitized by Google

vator, a suspect, a hypocrite in the eyes of the Catholic party. So strangely fallen was the Man of God.

"My son and I," writes Louisa. She makes no note of Margaret, whose mystical fervour was heightened by persecution. She was now more than ever identified with the party of reform; for their abrupt danger had touched the strongest fibre of her nature, her compassion for the oppressed. Heedless of her own peril, she toiled day and night to rescue and preserve these impoverished fugitives — to obtain a hiding-place for this, a pardon for that, a pension for the other. And she worked to such purpose, she used to such effect her influence with Francis, that from 1521, when the persecution began, until 1525, the year of the captivity, no victim was burned alive at the stakes of the orthodox. Still there were other miseries: flogging, branding, torture, miserable dungeons, from which she could not rescue all suspected. And the spectacle of so much pain and such injustice wounded her gentle heart, and did not rankle there. Strange tenderness for the oppressed, that showed no reverse of hatred for the oppressor; constancy in well-doing, that knew no disdain for the weaker and more fickle. This exquisite humanity, this perfume of charity, is the very breath of Margaret's soul. While rescuing Roussel and Lefebvre, sheltering the poor shepherdless flock of Meaux, she felt no bitterness towards their betrayer. She did not resent the failure of this timid pastor to whom she had entrusted her soul and so many others. He having flagged and fallen away, she quietly stepped into his vacant place and took upon her slender shoulders the burden he had dropped. From this moment Margaret, not Briçonnet, is the centre of the movement of Meaux.

Digitized by Google

No censure escaped her lips; she did not even interrupt her correspondence with the Bishop, and maintained it always on the same tone of reverence and appeal. Perhaps it was not all charity. At least, I think, a factor in that long-suffering charity of hers was a certain chivalrous denseness, a certain obstinacy in clinging to an ideal, which made her patiently accept the faulty Briçonnet as her spiritual superior, even as she accepted Francis as her perfect hero, despite the many foibles, the long debasement, the patent degradation, which would have disenchanted any other worshipper. The pedestal on which this idealising woman set her idols was so high that she did not see their feet of clay. And, bowed down before her shrines, she offered a life-long unparalleled devotion to those whose real qualities she never even saw.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

(1521–1524.)

CONSTABLE BOURBON.

"*Il me fault mesler de beaucoup de chouses que me doibvent bien donner crainte*": thus Margaret wrote to Briçonnet in 1521. Already, indeed, she must have felt the dreadful approach of nearer troubles than wars with the Emperor or uneasy peace with England. In that year the King took from his school-fellow, Constable Bourbon, the right to lead the vanguard, and gave it to his brother-in-law d'Alençon, a man without genius or experience of warfare. In the next summer Louisa of Savoy began a lawsuit against this Constable Bourbon, her cousin, in which she laid claim to the Bourbon estates. Charles de Montpensier, a Bourbon Cadet, had married Suzanne, the hunch-backed daughter of Pierre Duke of Bourbon and Anne of Beaujeu. Naturally he took possession of the vast inheritance which came with his wife from her father and her mother. But the Crown declared that the estates of Anne of Beaujeu lapsed at her death to the King; that she had, in fact, a mere life-interest in them. And Louisa, a niece of Pierre, claimed his

Digitized by Google

inheritance on the death of Suzanne. Thus, in her cruel anger, she hoped to denude the Constable of the whole of the heritage of his dead wife. Such a hatred as hers, altering the whole course of Europe for many years, deserves to be explained. Louisa was a violent hater; nor was this the first shock that her private spite had given to the public weal of France. She had already hated the House of Foix: Madame de Chateaubriand, the King's almost royal mistress, and her brothers Lautrec and Lescun, the Viceroys at Milan. In order to secure the disgrace of Lautrec, Louisa had intercepted the money which the King had finally despatched to pay the Swiss troops in the Milanese. Louisa embezzled the money, and the mercenaries revolted. Lautrec was disgraced, and France lost Milan.

And now Madame directed her hate against a greater rival with larger interests at stake. The Constable Bourbon was, after the King, the most important personage of France. He possessed, through his marriage with Suzanne of Bourbon-Beaujeu, no less than seven French provinces. When his eldest child was born the King stood sponsor; and the guests were served at table by five hundred gentlemen in velvet. No prince in Europe displayed a more stately magnificence than he. He was, indeed, a striking and picturesque figure, this half-Italian soldier, only five years older than the King, but looking more resolved, maturer, with his tragic Southern aspect, set mouth, and great melancholy eyes. He was no less brave than Francis, and a far better leader; for, indeed, good soldiership was his natural inheritance from his Bourbon ancestors, who had all been generals, and his Gonzaga forebears, all Condottieri. He was the cousin

Digitized by Google

of those Mantuan Gonzagas who had but lately added Montferrat to their domains. This French Gonzaga was no less resolved to rise. Through a prudent marriage, he had become the richest man in France; and he was determined that his courage and address should make him the most powerful. Already, in 1513, Louis XII. had created him Constable of France as a reward for his prowess in battle. King Francis, on his succession, might, however, have annulled this dangerous favour. No wise sovereign would permit a prince, young, popular, of a great race, and immensely rich, to remain Constable of France. An office so powerful, if occupied at all, should only be filled, as a compliment to bygone valour, by some decrepit general too old to mutiny. For the Constable was virtually king of the army. The Sovereign himself, in time of war, could order nothing save through him. Knowing this, and seeing the Constable's proud and resolute mien, Henry of England had said, in 1520, "Were he my subject, he should no longer wear his head!"

But Bourbon meant to wear his head and, if possible, a crown upon it. He found a means to keep in favour with the King through the all-powerful influence of Louisa. Louisa was forty-five years old, but still very handsome; she was far more ardent and vehement than in her youth, violent and tender at once, credulous as to the effect of her own charms; in fact, a woman made to be deceived. She fell passionately in love with this dark young Bourbon whom she had brought up with her own children; and for some time he made great use of her affection. She was the King's mother and a very clever woman, still handsome, still courted; no doubt, in spite of the thirteen years difference between them, he would have married her if no heir

Digitized by Google

had been born to Francis; and during the first three years of his reign Queen Claude gave the King only daughters. But in 1518 the Dauphin was born; in 1519 Henry, the King's second son. And then Bourbon began to shift his plans. If he still courted Louisa, it was in the hope of winning Renée, Queen Claude's young sister, whom he wished to marry, and as a means to the favour of the Duchess Margaret, with whom he fell in love; and gradually Madame perceived that she had lost him. She remembered all that she had done for him; how her influence had kept him in power; all the pensions she had heaped upon him, 24,000 livres as Constable, 14,000 as Gentleman of the Chamber, 24,000 as Governor of Languedoc; this in addition to his vast estates. She remembered that she was old and he was young, that she loved him and he used her to his profit. And then, in her furious indignation, she strove to undo all that she had done, to shatter this grandeur she had herself built up. So in 1521 the King took the leading of the Vanguard from Bourbon, who was at least a soldier, and gave it to Alençon. And in 1522 Madame began her lawsuit for the Bourbon estates.

Bourbon was quite aware that the King's mother, rightly or wrongly, was certain to gain her suit. He was also aware that, shorn of his lands, his power would be gone. He was the greatest landowner in France; the extent of his estates had become a proverb.

> "L'Empereur est grand terrein,
> Plus grand que Monsieur de Bourbon,"

writes Clément Marot. He was, in fact, the standard of comparison. He was resolved not to lose his im-

Digitized by Google

portance. But only two courses now were open to him: either, relying on Louisa's past affection, to marry her, the rival heir, or, in case of a decision granted in her favour, to mutiny against the crown of France.

Charles of Bourbon, indignant, high-spirited, outraged, decided on the latter course. He was already regarded as the head of the popular party. The graver of the nobles were with him, Louis de Brézé, Seneschal of Normandy, St. Vallier, and many others. "All the great personages," says Charles V., "are for him." The Parliament, no less, saw in the Constable the advocate of its rights and privileges, persistently disregarded by the King. The lawyers were with him, and the Liberal bourgeois. He was supposed to be the great reformer, the man who had the wrongs of the country at heart. "This virtuous prince," writes Cardinal Wolsey, "seeing the ill-conduct of the King and the vast extent of abuses, wished to reform the kingdom and assuage the poor people." This, of course, is stating the case from the point of view of the enemies of France. Yet, if Bourbon had remained in his own provinces, there is no saying how his rebellion might have ended.

England and the Empire saw with delight this dissension between Francis and the greatest of his subjects. They each sent a secret envoy to the Constable; and it was privately agreed that, as soon as Francis should be gone to reconquer Milan, the English should invade Picardy, the Germans and Spaniards enter Guienne and Burgundy, while the Constable should seize the central provinces. The kingdom conquered, each should satisfy what he considered his just claims. Henry should take the North, and call himself

Digitized by Google

in earnest King of France; Charles regain his old dukedom of Burgundy; the Constable should govern Provence and Bourbonnais as a sovereign prince. So three claimants should be satisfied, and France exist no more.

To such a pass the enmity of Louisa and his own furious anger had driven the Constable. He had of late had much to suffer. The King had publicly insulted him at table; his generalship was taken from him; his estates were to be handed to another. But at present Bourbon endured in silence, waiting for an expedient to leave Paris almost in battle array.

Let us hear how it struck a contemporary. "And my said Lord of Bourbon," writes the Bourgeois of Paris, "on Friday, the 27th of March of the said year 1522, left Paris, by the King's leave, to go through Brie and towards Provence; *and he took with him all the archers and all the crossbowmen of Paris,* in order to take five or six hundred evil livers and bandits which did much harm in the flat country there. And many of them were hung. *And thence he went into his own land of Bourbonnais.*

"In the said year 1523, Friday the 11th of September, news was brought to Paris by Réné, the Lyons' messenger, that Monsieur de Bourbon had left the land of France; and on Our Lady's day in September had departed in secret from his land of Bourbonnais; and by the sound of trumpet he was proclaimed a traitor throughout the land of France; and it was proclaimed that whoso should take the said Lord of Bourbon and deliver him into the hands of the said Grand Master, my Lord Alençon, or into the hands of M. de la Palisse, the King would grant him 10,000 golden

Digitized by Google

crowns; or for information where he could be taken, 20,000 ordinary crowns."

But soon it became known that no one would easily earn those 10,000 golden crowns; for M. de Bourbon was in the camp of the Emperor, preparing to invade Provence. The tide of opinion suddenly turned. Bourbon was no longer a popular hero; men saw in him, and justly, a traitor leagued against his country with her bitterest enemies. Nothing could have been better for Francis, whose carelessness and frivolity had begun to disgust the more serious of his subjects. He was again the Knight of France, the champion of the French, the Ogier of his time; the true Amadis defending his kingdom from a traitor; while Bourbon, mistrusted even by his allies, obtained but the third place in the Emperor's army. The Marseillais fought so well against the Constable that a panic seized the invading army, thrust back pell-mell into Italy, defeated without a blow. Meanwhile the nobles of Bourbon's party refused to rise. The rebellion came to nothing.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

(1524–1525).

SEQUELS.

Hélas, La Palice est mort,
Il est mort devant Pavie;
Hélas, s'il n'estoit pas mort
Il seroit encore en vie.

Quand le roi partit de France
A la malheur il partit,
Il en partit le dimanche
Et le Lundi il fust pris.

Chanson de Pavie.

FRANCIS was not satisfied that he had preserved his kingdom, and secured his crown. A second time he determined to reconquer Milan. Against Louisa's earnest prayers he crossed the Alps again, to fight for that Milanese which her bitterness had lost him; and across the Alps with him went many a gallant gentleman who never should return. Bayard and Bonnivet and La Palice should fall upon the field; Alençon return to die of a broken spirit; Montmorency and

Digitized by Google

young Navarre, with the King himself, should fall into a long captivity. But these were all impatient then to fight the Emperor, because the traitor Bourbon was sheltered in his army.

The presence of Bourbon in the Imperial camp was, indeed, the strongest motive that Francis had to continue the campaign. For the situation was in the highest degree difficult and desperate. Germany, Spain, and England were banded together against France; which, after a definite success against the Emperor's army under Bourbon and Pescara, might with all honour have proposed an advantageous peace. But Francis could not rest till the traitor was punished—till the traitor was punished and beautiful Milan reconquered.

So, in an evil moment, he led his armies south. Louisa, who strongly disapproved of this rash venture; Margaret, anxious and grave, with her husband and her brother both in Italy, remained at Lyons with the poor consumptive Queen. Claude was dying in great resignation at twenty-five years of age. Before the armies reached Milan, the King received the news that she was dead. He who had neglected her living, felt a genuine pang at her death. "I had not thought," he cried in naive remorse, "that the bonds of marriage were so hard and difficult to break. Could I buy her life with mine, she should live again." But Claude was beyond all care and kindness. She left her three little boys, François, Henri, and Charles, and her three little daughters, the pious, loving Charlotte, beautiful Magdelaine, and wise little Marguerite, in the custody of their father's sister. Henceforth, Margaret was to them as a mother; and the most touching and charming of her letters are those

Digitized by Google

written to the absent King about his motherless children.

Margaret had many troubles with this family of nephews and nieces; and, in her busy home at Lyons, eagerly she watched the distant campaign, where her husband was, and her brother, and Montmorency her life-long friend; yet the gout of Madame and the measles of the children seemed the most eventful things. Madame had injured her health with nursing the Queen. "I fear her health grows weaker and weaker," writes Margaret. And, indeed, reflecting on the dangers and disasters which her passions had brought upon the kingdom, Louisa may well have grieved and grown weak. "The extremity of sorrow which she shows for the death of the Queen is quite incredible." Yet Louisa had never been a tender mother to poor ailing Claude.

But Margaret, with her sweet dense kindness, was not the woman to discover if anything worse than mourning ailed her mother. Like all idealists, she was not very quick of insight. To her, the death of Claude was an excuse sufficient for all. And, without inquiring too deeply, she strove to heal her mother's wound by a tender care which sheltered her as far as possible from trouble and apprehension.

Just then the children took the measles. Margaret would not tell her mother, so ill and weary already; nor her brother, who needed all his heart for battle. It is only to Bishop Briçonnet (no less than heretofore a guide, philosopher and friend) that she opens her troubled heart. "It has pleased our Lord to give Madame Charlotte so grievous a malady of fever and flux after her measles, that I know not if now He will take her to Himself." This is on the 15th of Sep-

Digitized by Google

tember. But poor little Charlotte was not so easily released; for thirty days she was very ill. Margaret scarcely left her side. She dearly loved this tender spiritual little soul, to whom in after days she dedicated a poem of which we shall hear more than once again: *Le Myrouer de l'âme pescheresse.* While she stooped over the bed, tending the sick child in anxious loneliness of fear, the great affairs of the world went on outside. Milan was recaptured, siege laid to Pavia; but these battles and sieges seemed all dim and lifeless, like a figured tapestry shaken in the wind; while, alive, suffering and real, little Madame Charlotte lay upon her knees, and Margaret spoke with her of Jesus and of Paradise. At last an end came, the poor little girl succumbed to exhaustion: "delivered from a little body that could not live on earth till eight years old," and Margaret writes to Briçonnet in a strain of strange religious exultation, like to that she displayed again in later years upon the death of her only son:—

"Where the Strongest has come, he hath vanquished the armed flame, and hath commanded the sea to stop its waves, and hath left content and joyous, nor able to praise him enough, my heart and my spirit. Even (to say the truth) he hath cured and fortified my body, vainly labouring with little repose, for the space of a month, while the little lady was ill. But after her death, I suffered for the King, from whom I had concealed his daughter's illness; who yet divined her death, having dreamed three times that she said to him: 'Farewell, my King, I go to Paradise!' [*Adieu, mon Roy, je voys en Paradis!*] and this caused him an extreme sorrow, which (by the goodness of God) he endured patiently. And Madame,

Digitized by Google

who had not heard of it, learned it all, through a captain of Adventure, and bore it in such a manner that from dinner-time till supper (one tear not waiting for the other, without uttering sighs of impatience or vexation) she did not cease to preach and undertake towards me the office of comforter which I owed to her."

Soon Margaret had to comfort her mother for a far heavier sorrow. The easy success of Milan was not followed up before Pavia. Yet, the 3rd of February 1525, Francis despatched to his mother a letter three quarto pages long, with a plan of Pavia enclosed, showing her how certain the French army was of taking the town by assault. Ten days later the battle took place; the French army was routed with disaster, all the great soldiers of France killed or captive, the King himself a prisoner. So ran the dreadful news. Worse still for the weeping mother and daughter at Lyons, it was soon known that the cowardice and incapacity of the Duke of Alençon was the cause of the worst disaster. He, the leader of the vanguard, had failed to come to the rescue of the King, abandoned by his Swiss. Not even Bourbon, the triumphant traitor, was more execrable that day in France than he.

On the evening after the battle, Francis in his captive's tent, drew off his ring and sent it to Soliman. By a less secret messenger he sent a letter to his mother: "Of all things I have none left but honour, and life, which is safe." Yet he beseeches them not to give way to too extreme a sorrow: "For still I hope that in the end God will not forsake me." And so, like true comforters, Margaret and her mother hide their desperate grief from him; writing cheer-

Digitized by Google

fully about little things; beseeching him not to fast, it is bad for the health; thanking God that his honour and life are safe; and hiding from him the dreadful task they have, poor women, to keep order in the panic-stricken realm when the full extent of defeat is known. Bayard was killed in the autumn, and now Bonnivet is slain. Lescun de Foix, La Palice, the great marshal—they are all dead, with many others who were as a tower of strength. And Montmorency, the wise and cold, he and the young King of Navarre, and Brion, the brilliant Admiral Chabot, are prisoners with the King of France.

But Alençon, the disgraced, the hated, the shameful, he is neither dead nor in prison. Sick at heart, leading the miserable remainder of his troops, he makes his way to Lyons where his wife awaits him. As he marched along he must have heard the bitter words, and angry songs of the resentful populace. The length and breadth of the land was sore against *les fuyards de Pavie*. "I hate more than poison," cries Rabelais, "a man who flies when sword-play comes into fashion. Why am I not King of France for eighty or a hundred years? My God! I would crop the tails of the curs who fled from Pavia." And in every village the labourers sang the first *Chanson de Pavie* with its melancholy close:—

Mais par gens deshonnestes
Fust laissé lachement.

Another ballad was sung to the air *Que dites-vous ensemble*. Through the streets, and along the lanes where the voices of the ploughers echoed gravely, the miserable Duke must have heard the same monotonous chant:—

Digitized by Google

Qui vit jamais au monde
Ung roy si courageux
De se mettre en battaille ;
Et délaissé de ceulx,
En qui toute fiance
Et qui tenoit asseur,
L'ont laissé en souffrance !
Veez là le malheur !

By the time the troops reached Lyons, the unhappy man was ill with despair and remorse. It was now April, two months after the disaster. But France had not yet begun to forgive him. Even his wife, the gentle Margaret, would not see him. The man she had never really loved was odious to her since he had ruined the brother she adored. But when she learned how seriously the poor defeated general took his failure to heart, how he was actually dying of his disgrace and her resentment, then pity and duty came to her aid. She wrote to Francis :—

"As for your poor sister, she writes this letter to you sitting at the foot of M. d'Alençon's bed ; he has prayed me to present you, with my own, his very humble recommendation, and to say that had he seen you ere he died he would go more happily towards Paradise. I do not know what to say to you, my Lord. All is in the hand of God. Only, I beseech you not to sorrow, either for him or for me ; and be sure that whatever comes, I hope that God will give me strength to keep my trouble from Madame."

On the 11th April, the mediocre, luckless, unhappy Alençon breathed his last. Margaret, drawn close to him by these last days of shame, and pity, and sorrow, sorrowed for the death she scarcely could regret. "Those first two days," she writes, "made me forget all reason, but since then, my Lord, my mother has

Digitized by Google

never seen me with a tear in the eye, or a mournful face, for I should hold myself too much more than miserable if I, who can do you service in nothing, were the cause of hindrance to her courage, who does so much for you and for all yours. But whatever I can do to give her recreation, believe, my Lord, I do it; for I desire so much to see you both happy together, that, hoping in God to have this blessing, I neither will nor can think of any other thing."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

THE CAPTIVITY.

Left a captive in the tents of Charles, Francis looked towards every State in Europe and saw no hope of succour. England was against him; Spain, Austria, Italy, Germany, were his enemies. Drawing his ring from his finger, Francis sent it as a sign to Soliman the Magnificent, Sultan of Turkey.

The first messenger was murdered on his way; but the ring was finally obtained by Ibrahim, the brilliant Vizier of the Sultan, who wore it in triumph. A second ambassador, a certain Frangipani, was immediately despatched; he bore a letter and messages from Francis to Soliman, and returned secretly with the Sultan's answer. Thus a secret understanding began between France and the East, by the terms of which trade was to be encouraged between the two countries. Soliman promised that the Christian creed should be respected as his own. A French Consul was appointed at Alexandria. Whilst, more than all this, it was agreed that Soliman should attempt to win the Hungarian frontier of the Empire; thus harassing Charles in the East and giving room for the development of France in the West.

Digitized by Google

But before any result could come of this alliance Francis must be free. Soliman, in his letter, bids him not despair. It is not strange that great kings should be captive. And he adds, "My horse is always saddled, and my sword by day and night is girdled on." But it is difficult to see how Soliman could rescue the royal captive, unless by invading Hungary he could call Charles and his armies from Madrid, and leave Spain open to a French invasion.

Such plans were vague and audacious; and the present misery very real. The King was taken from Lombardy and sent to Madrid. Meanwhile panic reigned in his kingdom. Notwithstanding the poverty and division of the Emperor's camp, it still seemed possible to abandoned France that Bourbon the traitor might enter in and ravage her. Religious discord increased. The party of Luther and the Clerical party each attributed the sorrows of France to the corruption or the impiety of the other. In this year the first burnings began; and, under the influence of Cardinal Duprat, Louisa the Regent showed herself implacable towards the Reformation. The Parliament wrote to her, representing "the inconveniences which may arise from the heresies which pullulate throughout this realm": and trials were instituted against Lefebvre, Caroli, and Roussel. These were with difficulty rescued by Margaret, who procured an autograph remission of their process from her brother. Francis commanded Parliament to entreat the accused as "personages of great knowledge and men of letters and doctrine." But the danger was still so great that Roussel and Lefebvre fled to Strasburg, and henceforth corresponded under feigned names, only known to the initiated. Danger, however, only

Digitized by Google

increased the fervour of the Reformers; and from their exile they influenced the current of thought in France. The misery of earth helped to quicken the impulse towards Heaven.

"The further they take you from us," writes Margaret to her brother in May, on the eve of his journey to Spain, "the more increases in me the firm hope that I have of your deliverance and speedy return. For at the time when human wisdom fails and is troubled, then the master-work of our Lord is wrought; for it is He who alone will have the glory and the honour."

So, in these early days of the captivity, France awaited a miracle in favour of her King. His captivity had revived all the enthusiastic devotion of his people. Amadis for chivalry, Absalom for beauty, Ogier for courage, so the popular ballads of the moment portray him. The fight he made on foot alone against his captors of Pavia inspired a host of songs:—

Son cheval fust tué
  Là on vist Olivier,
Roland, aussy Richard
  Demenant leur mestier
Combattant tout à pied
  Comme Hector Troyannois
Oncques tel n'en sortit
  Du beau nom de Valoys.

Through the whole civilised world, his captivity shed a brighter lustre on the chivalry of Francis. England classed him with Richard, her troubadour *par excellence*; France with Charlemagne and with John the Good, her paragons of honour; and Soliman himself, writing to the King in prison, reminds him that Bajazet, the hero of Turkey, suffered a like misfortune. But it was above all in Spain, in the land of his captivity, that the cult of Francis reached its most fantastic

Digitized by Google

heights. The Spaniards, instinct with romance, chivalry, respect for heroic misfortune, saw their ideal in this flimsy and volatile Francis. Thrown by the Austrian Charles (always a foreigner to all his subjects) into a dark, unsightly prison, the French King inspired a reverent pity in the generous heart of Spain. From the lowest to the highest, the nation was interested in the illustrious captive. The family of the Duke of Infantado received a caution from the Emperor, offended by their enthusiasm. "Persons of great standing," writes Margaret, later, "desire nothing more than the return of the Emperor to Italy; and then you would not long be left in prison!" Ximena del Infantado fell so passionately in love with the royal captive, that, on his betrothal to another in 1526, she entered the religious life. And, indeed, Francis had never conquered so many hearts by his magnificence as yielded now to his misfortunes.

Charles found himself in the position of a gaoler, keeping his captive against the popular desire. The fret and annoyance of such a position hardened his heart. He behaved ungeneriously to the prisoner who was none the less his equal, his rival, his companion-in-arms. With no dislike to Francis (for whom, indeed, he ever had a contemptuous affection), he made his prison as dreary, as uncomfortable as possible, thinking thus speedily to exact from him the surrender of Burgundy. But Francis, for all his volatile spirit, had a certain fineness of disposition, a certain real chivalry under his Amadis airs and graces. He refused to grant the Emperor's terms, though, as the year drew on, the Alcazar became, in the sultry summer weather, an intolerable exchange for Fontainebleau. Still Francis refused to dismember his kingdom; growing a little

Digitized by Google

weaker every month in his unaccustomed restraint, and attaining much facility in making verses, the one amusement of his dreary prison.

Naturally this heroic obstinacy increased yet further his popularity in Spain. The Emperor's sister, the young widow of the King of Portugal, shared the universal passion. Leonor of Austria was at this time about six-and-twenty years of age; not regularly beautiful. Yet her face, preserved to us by a painter of Clouet's school, far exceeds in interest and charm the more regular beauties of her day. A thin face, delicately sharp in outline, a hatchet-face it might be called unkindly, is set in bushy masses of crisp hair, whose reddish gold is wonderfully clear and beautiful in tint. The face, too, is fresh and ~~fair in colour~~. A charming half-boyish face, with its shock of blonde hair and eager chevaleresque expression; an ardent face, with the Austrian lip modified to the self-willed, resolute pout of a spoiled girl, not brooking hindrance to her generous impulses. Yet this ardent blonde, with her look of chivalrous *naïveté*, her brilliant hair, and clear rosy colour, her full lips, and alert romantic air, has the dreamy, impassive, light-brown eyes, the thin finely-arched jet-black brows of a quite different type. There is something odd, unmatched, inharmonious, yet not unpleasing, in this brilliant face with the dull and dreamy gaze—something which tells us that this grandchild of the fiery Maximilian was the daughter of the mad Juana.

She had already played her romance, this quick-blooded Austrian-Spaniard, who represented all those qualities of their mixed race which her brother Charles ignored. In her girlhood, in her Flemish home, under the wing of her aunt, the politic Margaret, she had

Digitized by Google

met a handsome, stalwart German, the fair-haired Palatine Frederic. The two young people had fallen violently in love with each other, and kept their passion a secret for some months. But, finally, some well-informed Prime Minister got a hint of it; and the wayward Leonor was married against her will to a dissolute old dotard, the King of Portugal. On his death, the Palatine Frederic renewed his offers. But Leonor had already heard of her brother's captive, the Ogier, the Amadis, the Roland of France. She turned a deaf ear to her faithful Palatine.

Leonor had been promised by her brother to the Constable Bourbon. She refused to wed the traitor who had ruined her hero. Her frank, expansive nature did not seek to hide her interest. She writes to Louisa, "Would that it were in my power to deliver the King!" And, seeing Leonor so devoted, a new condition of peace began to be mooted in the court of Louisa at Lyons.

A letter exists, of which the signature is quite illegible, dated the 2nd of June 1525, and addressed to Louisa. Here the new plan is formulated for, I think, the first time. It is proposed that Leonor shall be given in marriage, not to Bourbon, but to Francis; that her daughter by her first husband be married to the young Dauphin; that the Duchess Margaret wed the Emperor; and Constable Bourbon the Princess Renée. On this plan the Duchy of Burgundy might be reserved for the eldest son of Leonor and Francis. This would, however, dismember the Dauphin's inheritance. On the 6th of June, Madame, who was Regent in France, sent an embassy to Madrid, to treat of the marriage of Leonor with Francis and of the Dauphin with her daughter. But all the other conditions of

Digitized by Google

peace waited the arrival of Madame d'Alençon. For it was now determined that the Duchess Margaret should visit her brother at Madrid, and solicit the Emperor on his behalf. "The arrival of Madame Marguerite," writes Brion in July from Venezuello, "will decide the deliverance of the King."

After some delay the Emperor sent a safe conduct to Margaret, and she prepared for her adventurous journey. Many mistrusted the integrity of Charles, and feared that he might invent some pretext to detain her as a hostage. "*Dieu vuelle que la fin seé como lo principé*" (God grant that the end be no worse than the beginning), wrote at this moment a citizen of Marseilles. And many feared other perils less august: the highway robbers who then infested the less-travelled portions of France and Spain. The season, too, was signally unhealthy; hot, with violent storms and thunder. But Margaret disregarded all these things; she was to see her brother again and to do him a service.

Much was, indeed, hoped for this journey, much expected from the influence of Margaret upon the Emperor. At another moment she might have shrunk from petitioning the man who had not yet answered the proposals which gave her to him in marriage. But during this long tedious journey she was subject to an access of exaltation, such as in times of great danger and difficulty she had experienced before. She seemed impervious to any thought but one, that she was nearing her captive brother; and as needles do not hurt the tender flesh of tranced women, nor tortures reach the sense of martyrs in their hour of crowning, so neither bodily discomfort nor wounded pride touched the feeling of Margaret at this moment.

On her road towards Madrid, a fortnight's journey

Digitized by Google

then from the frontier, she sent frequent letters to her brother. "I implore you," she cries, "to believe that whatsoever I can do in your service, were it to scatter to the winds the ashes of my bones, nothing would be to me either strange, or difficult, or painful, but consolation, repose, and honour. And at this hour, my Lord, I well know what strength of love our Lord has put in us three; for that which seemed to me impossible, thinking only of myself, is easy in the memory of you; and this makes me desire, for your good, things which the pains of death should not have made me wish for my own repose."

On her slow and painful way Margaret was met by dreadful news: the King was very ill. The hot summer weather and close confinement had brought him to death's door. The news spread like wildfire, causing a thrill of horror in France. The Dauphin was but seven years old; and a long regency seemed to threaten the exhausted nation. "News came," says the Bourgeois of Paris, "that the King was dead, captive, in a town called Madril; whence great trouble and sorrow arose among the people of Paris and throughout the land of France; and this lasted nigh a month."

Meanwhile Margaret hastened her journey towards her dying brother. In her litter, as she went, she wrote songs about him:—

Le desir du bien que j'actendz
Me donne de travail matière;
Une heure me dure cent ans,
Et me semble que ma lictière
Ne bouge, ou retourne en arrière;
Tant j'ay de m'avancer desir.
O qu'ell' est longue, la carrière
Où à la fin gist mon plaisir!

Digitized by Google

Je regarde de tous costés
  Pour veoir s'il arrive personne;
Pryant sans cesser, n'en doubtez,
  Dieu, que santé à mon Roy donne.
Quant nul ne voy, l'oiel j'abandonne
  À pleurer; puis sur le pappier
Ung peu de ma douleur j'ordonne:
  Voilà mon douleureux mestier!

O qu'il sera le bienvenu,
  Celluy qui, frappant à ma porte
Dira: Le Roy est revenu
  En sa santé très bonne et forte!
Alors la seur, plus mal que morte,
  Courra baiser le messaiger
Qui telles nouvelles apporte
  Que son frère est hors de dangier!

But no messenger came to win Margaret's embraces by such welcome news. The King sank lower and lower. An abscess had formed on the crown of his head; the body, already wasted by fever, could scarcely support this additional cause of weakness. On Monday, the 18th of September, Francis was so ill that his attendants sent for the Emperor, who all this time had never visited his ailing captive. Charles was really shocked when he heard that his rival lay a-dying. He travelled all the next day from Segovia to Madrid. It was dark when he reached the Alcazar where Francis was confined. Charles dismounted, leaving his *cortège* outside, lest their presence should fatigue his prisoner. The Viceroy of Naples and Anne de Montmorency met him at the gate, lighting the way with torches. So they reached the unprincely room where the most magnificent prince in Europe lay dying on his prison-bed.

Seeing the Emperor enter, Francis tried to raise himself on his elbow; but Charles, who, after all, was

Digitized by Google

still a young man with a natural heart, threw himself on his knees beside the bed and flung himself into the arms of Francis. So for a long time captive and captor held each other tightly embraced.

Then said Francis, who witnessed this affection with some excusable irony, "Sire, you see before you your prisoner and your slave!"

"Nay," cried Charles, with real remorse, "my good brother and true friend whom I hold as free!"

This was too much for Francis. He looked round the room.

"Your slave!" he repeated.

"My friend, who *shall* be free!" repeated the Emperor.

So the little scene has been handed down to us. We can imagine to what hopes and desires gave rise these words of Charles, dictated half by generous remorse, half by a desire to keep alive a valuable prisoner. On the morrow Margaret arrived. It was the 20th September. The Emperor was still at the Alcazar. When the bustle of her attendants announced her arrival he went down-stairs to receive this woman who had been proposed to him as a wife. He found her in the doorway, pale and in tears. She was dressed from head to foot in white, the mourning of a royal widow. He led her, still weeping, to her brother. When he shut the door on their meeting, he must have remembered that proposal of marriage, and recalled the pale, dishevelled woman he had left. She had had no time to repair the disorders of travel; she was worn with her long, hot journey over rough, unshaded roads. Her beautiful hair and graceful figure were seen at a disadvantage. Her long face with the marked features must have appeared haggard

Digitized by Google

in its grief. At least so much is clear; Charles, who at twenty-five years old, was the most important personage of his age, did not fall in love with this pale and tearful widow of three-and-thirty, whom he now encountered for the first time. We hear no more of a marriage between him and Margaret.

Meanwhile the joy was great between the brother and the sister. For the moment Francis appeared out of danger. But three days after, on the 25th September, the sinking of death appeared to overpower him. Montmorency sent a hurried message to the Emperor, who received with chill resignation the news that his scheming was outplanned by Death. "God has given him to me," he exclaimed, "and God has taken him away!" Yet he knew that if Francis died the battle of Pavia had been bought too dearly.

Meanwhile Margaret, in agony and exaltation, knelt praying by her brother's side. Francis lay quite insensible upon his bed. But none the less his sister had an altar dressed in his cell, and sent for the Archbishop and his priests to say a mass. At the moment of the elevation of the Host, the Archbishop turned and spoke to the dying King. Francis opened his eyes and asked for the Holy Sacrament. That evening the abscess broke, and immediate danger was over.

The King was still very weak; still feverish and needing better air and greater comforts than his prison could supply. Margaret at once began negotiations for a peace. But now she found the Emperor did not remember the words that had so often been quoted to her. He seemed in no haste to set his good brother free.

Margaret was in great distress. Even for her

Digitized by Google

brother's sake she could not counsel the surrender of Burgundy. And yet, unless she could satisfy Charles, there seemed nothing but perpetual imprisonment for Francis. No other king would come forward as a champion. Soliman as yet had made no sign, nor would he be likely to leave Turkey in the winter; and before another summer came her brother might be dead. Louisa, at home, had concluded a peace with Henry of England; but that wary king would only risk his moral support. And, to complicate her troubles, Montmorency had become jealous of her influence with her sick brother. She has to warn Francis not to listen to such tales of her as this old and long-loved friend may tell him. "I pray you, my lord," she writes, "keep me in your good graces, in spite of Montmorency, who is jealous."

Meanwhile the outer world kept assuring her that she was certain to conclude an advantageous peace. "*A vous, Madame, l'honneur et la mérite,*" write the ministers from France in premature congratulation. "*Ne fais doubte que Madame d'Alençon, vostre seur, conclura tost une bonne paix,*" writes Charles himself to the king, in the letter where he excuses himself from paying further visits to his captive. But Margaret must have suffered many a bitter doubt. She writes to her brother on the road to Toledo, from a village whither she has gone to conduct her business with the Emperor; and her letter (before the 13th) is full of trouble and of wounded pride:—

"October 1525.

"My Lord,

"You will have heard from Monsieur d'Ambrun and Babou of the terms they persist in here; which

Digitized by Google

are not like the letters and the kind words which Véré brought you from his master, as you shall know at greater length from their lips. Since their departure the Viceroy has sent me word that, in his opinion, it were better for me to go to meet the Emperor. But I have forwarded him a message by Monsieur de Senlys that I have never yet stirred from my lodging without being sent for; and that when the Emperor chooses to send for me I am to be found in a certain convent, where at present I have stayed from one o'clock till five, vainly waiting an answer.

"This is already the third day I have scarcely set my foot outside of convents; and this I have told the Viceroy I shall continue to do, so that the world at large may know that, if I do not speak with the Emperor, still my rank requires me not to court his courtiers and tamper with the servants of a master who promised you that I should speak to him alone of your affairs. I shall see, this evening, what they will do; and to-morrow, having received your commands, I shall follow them as best I can. And I assure you, my lord, that here they are so perplexed and hindered that they greatly fear I shall ask the Emperor's leave to retire; or so I gather from what has been said to the seneschal and to Senliz; and I fancy that by keeping our heads high a little longer we may force them to speak another language. And, come what may, we will deliver you by the grace of God. But I beseech you, since they set so infamously to work, do not trouble yourself about the slow progress we make in bringing them to the point, where so greatly desires to arrive

"YOUR MARGUERITE."*

* Champollion-Figeac.

Digitized by Google

Finally, on the 13th October, Margaret was received at Toledo by the Emperor in person, "with great politeness," says Ferreras, the Spaniard; but Margaret does not seem so satisfied. "*Je le trouvay bien froit*," she writes to her brother—"I found him very cold, but not inclined to stand on ceremony; for he put me off on pretext of speaking to his council, and said he would give me an answer to-day. And then he took me to see Queen Alyenor, his sister; where I stayed until quite late. And last night I went to see her, and she spoke to me in terms of great friendliness. It is true she goes on her journey* to-morrow, and I must go and take leave of her. I think she goes more by obedience than by choice, for they keep her very much in order. And as I was talking to her the Viceroy came in quest of me, and I went to the Emperor's apartments, who sent for me to come to his chamber; and he told me he desired your deliverance in perfect amity; but, in the end, he stopped at the question of Burgundy."

Margaret, by this time, centred her hopes on the intercession of Leonor. The Emperor's fine speeches, though abundant, covered an iron will, and she learned to put little trust in them. "He assures me always," she writes, "that he will do a thing that I shall marvel at." "But," she adds, elsewhere, "I think they all wish to content me without doing anything in reason." And again, "Everyone tells me he loves the King, but I have little experience of it." The only way to get at a peace was through Leonor, who might bring Burgundy as a dower.

"I desire, for your good, things which the pains of

* To Talavera, out of the way of Madame d'Alenzon's influence.—State Papers, Cardinal de Granvelle.

Digitized by Google

death should not make me wish for my own repose." So Margaret had written to her brother on her journey to Madrid; and now she found herself obliged perforce to agree to cruel terms. "I assure you, my lord," she writes to Francis, "that the office of solicitor in so unreasonable a company is a far more difficult service than it was to be your physician when you were sick."

Not until the end of the month was any result obtained from the frequent conferences between Margaret and the Emperor; then the following conditions were drawn up and sent to the King, "things which the bitterness of death should not make me wish for my own repose."

The King of France was to resign Burgundy, Auxonne, Macon, Auxerre, La Brie, Bar-sur-Seine, to the banks of the Somme. To this extravagant demand Margaret would not agree.

He was to resign Tournay, Flanders, and Artois; he was to resign all right to Milan and Naples; he was to resign all pretensions to Aragon. Agreed.

He was to abandon Henry d'Albret, King of Navarre, Robert de la Marche, and others, to the Emperor's justice. Not agreed to by Margaret.

He was to marry Leonor, Queen of Portugal, and settle Burgundy on their joint heirs. Refused by Charles.

M. de Bourbon, his allies and friends, to be reinstated in their former positions. Agreed.

Such miserable terms were the best to be obtained. With a sore heart must Margaret have watched the couriers set out from Toledo, carrying the news to her brother in prison. If he refused this peace, perpetual imprisonment lay before the gayest and most

Digitized by Google

splendid monarch of Europe. If, enfeebled by long captivity, he assented to these conditions, France must, perforce, descend to the level of a petty state.

But when in a few days the couriers returned, her heart must have beat high with glad recognition of her brother's chivalry. His letter ran:—

"MONSIEUR, MON FRÈRE,*

"I know you cannot condemn me to perpetual imprisonment more honestly than by asking, for my ransom, an impossible thing. On my side I am resolved to take my prison in good part, being sure that God (who knows I merit it not for long, being the captive of honourable warfare), God will give me strength to bear it patiently. And I have no regret, save only the fact that the honest proposals, which you chose to hold to me in my illness, should be barren of effect."

Thus affairs were still in the same state as on the morrow of Pavia.

Margaret was now in despair. Ferreras, the Spanish historian, assures us that she undertook to get Francis out of prison in disguise; that she put in his bed a negro who was accustomed to carry the wood to the King's fire, and dressing her brother in the slave's attire, and having blacked his face, attempted to escape with him in the dusk, but was discovered by a groom of the chambers. This may be true, or it may be a mere blundering remembrance of the escape of Henry d'Albret from Pavia. But in either case, it was evident there was no rescue for the King of France.

In November another scheme began to occupy Margaret and her brother; a scheme by which the

* Champollion-Figeac.

Digitized by Google

Emperor would have left in his hands no king whom a hard captivity might incline to shameful terms, but a simple nobleman whom he could have no interest to misuse. In his prison at Madrid, Francis spent long hours in drawing up the act of abdication, by which he renounced the crown of France in favour of his eldest son. In these letters patent, Francis narrates his misfortunes of Pavia, his illness in prison, and the rigour of Charles; he speaks of the journey of Margaret, and how all her reasonable offorts were refused; then he adds that he would rather that he should remain all his lifetime in prison than sever his kingdom of France in pieces. He and his children will pay the price, "They are born for the good of my kingdom; true children of the public weal"; and France, he reminds his subjects, has been governed well by younger kings with the help of good counsel. He therefore appoints the Dauphin Francis, King of France, under the regency of Madame. In the event of the death of Madame, her place shall be filled by "*nostre très chère et très amée seur unicque Marguerite de France.*" But, in case of the deliverance of the King, this act and all its contents to be held null and void.

History with one voice has attributed the inspiration of this act to Margaret. This one counsel, the cheering cordial of her presence, and the furtherance of a friendship between her brother and Leonor, was all she had accomplished in the visit from which she had hoped so much. And now that visit was at an end. She had incautiously let the three months covered by her safe conduct slip towards the close, dreading no treachery on the Emperor's part in her sweet, dense reliance on the honour of others. But she was warned in time, either by the suspicion of her

Digitized by Google

brother or by some watchful friend. Tradition records that Constable Bourbon, who had loved this gentle and courageous woman, could not stand by and see her condemned unwitting to a dreary imprisonment. After many a debate, the legend runs, he at last sent secret word to Francis, that if Margaret were not out of Spain by the close of December, the Emperor would consider her his captive. From some source, at least, she learned her danger at the end of November. By forced marches and unrelaxed haste, there was just time to reach home in safety.

Margaret set out at once, grieving sore to leave her brother. It was arranged that she should not wait for the Act of Abdication, which should be brought to France by Montmorency, whose ransom was paid by Francis, and who would leave Spain at the new year. Thus, should she fail to arrive in time, the letters patent would none the less be safe. So, in sore distress of mind, the poor sister departed.

All her hopes had come to nothing; all her endeavours had failed. There was still an endless prospect of exile or captivity before the adored brother and king to whom she said "Adieu!" perchance for ever. How willingly would she not have stayed behind and shared his prison! But she had a task to perform, another service to render. She must return to France, attend to his affairs, and educate his children. If she let fall her burden, there was the less hope for him.

She wrote to Montmorency from Alcala, the first stage of her journey, on the 20th November:—

"My Cousin,

"This morning when I awoke I received your letter, and I leave you to think if I was glad to hear

Digitized by Google

news of the King. As for my news, the body is but too well; but the spirit, I cannot deny it, remembers that which is left behind. Do you know that all night long I held the king's hand, and would not rouse myself in the morning, so as to have that pleasure a little longer? I try to take this departure as well as I can; but succour me with news of him as often as you may. Let me hear some good news—if you have any to tell."

That morning of discouragement and poignant regret was the first of many such days. She can think of nothing but the brother she has left. She encounters Brion, going with news from the frontier to the King. "Would to God," she cries, "that it were I returning! My speed would be nowise Brionnicque." But every day takes her farther and farther away. At last she writes to the brother whom, after all her pains, she has left unaided, and beseeches him to let her return and share his danger. She writes vaguely and strangely, feeling the risk to Francis if her letters fall into the secret and suspicious hands of Charles:—

"SIRE,

"That which you were pleased to write me, saying you would tell me further, has made me go on; hoping, moreover, that you would not leave the straight road, and flee from them who, for all their happiness, only desire to see you, *though worse off than before.*" (Is this a last prayer to give up Burgundy and be free?) "Let my intention be prescribed, if you should ever need the honest and ancient service which I have borne and bear to your good grace. And if the perfect imperfection of a hundred thousand faults make you disdain my obedience—then, at

Digitized by Google

least, Sire, do not increase my lamentable misery by demanding experience in addition to defeat, knowing my impotence without your aid, as you shall learn further by a sign I send. And I ask for the end of my misfortunes and the beginning of a good new year, only that you may let me be for you some little of that which infinitely you are to me, and will be to me, without ending, in my thoughts. And awaiting the joy of seeing you and of speaking with you, Sire, my desire of meeting presses me to humbly beseech you to let me know the answer by this messenger. And, if it be no trouble to you, I will set off at once, feigning another occasion. And there is no stress of weather nor roughness of the roads, that will not be turned for me into an exceeding pleasant repose. And I shall be most grateful to you. And yet more grateful if it please you to bury my letters in the fire and my words in silence. Else you will render worse than dead my miserable life."

Francis had the force to refuse this agonised appeal. He neither called his sister back nor yielded Burgundy. He sent her on to France and she obeyed, though sick at heart and shorn of all natural trust in her own efforts, "of which you know the impotence without your aid." But since the King commanded it, she travelled on, and on the 15th December she was home in France; she was in her mother's arms.

Back in France at last, and back again without the good news she had gone so far to get. Back in a disappointed, weary, restless, and ironic country. Back to hear the people singing in the streets, no longer of Ogier and Charlemagne, but a new satirical ballad:—

Rens, rens-toy, Roi de France,
Rens-toy donc, car tu es pris!

Digitized by Google

Back to confront Parliament with a writ of abdication, and a dissatisfied country, with the news of a Regency of women. Yet not for lack of striving was her task undone.

What else could she have done? Any peace that Charles would grant must, of necessity, dismember France. "And so," concludes the Bourgeois of Marseilles, "the said lady returned by land, and she made no good cheer, and not without cause; for she could not agree with the Emperor that her brother should be ransomed by money, but they demanded a portion of the realm, which we could not grant without great loss and dishonour.—*Dieu per sa pietat nos mande bueno pas.*"

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

1525–1530.

QUEEN OF NAVARRE.

Scarcely had Margaret returned with her mother to Lyons, on their slow progress from the frontier to the capital, when they were joined by another fugitive from the Emperor's prisons. Henry d'Albret, the young King of Navarre, had been taken captive with Francis; and since February he had been imprisoned in the fortress of Pavia. Despairing of any deliverance, one moonlit December night he dressed himself in his page's clothes and let himself down from his window into a dried-up moat, leaving his servant sleeping in his bed. The next morning a feeble voice behind the curtains answered the turnkey, whom a second page assured that the King was ill that day; nor till the night was the farce discovered, when the gaoler generously pardoned the two devoted pages. Meanwhile their master, a daring lad of two-and-twenty, escaped as best he might towards France, "*intempeste noctis silentio, et lune claritatis favore proadjuvante,*" as a contemporary narrated to Wolsey. On Christmas-eve he reached St. Just-sur-Lyon. It

Digitized by Google

was nearly a year since he had breathed freely, and now he was safe in France.* He rested there two days, whence he wrote to his chancellor to announce his escape; and then he made his way to the court of Louisa. He knew the Regent well; for on his mother's death, in 1519, the young King of Navarre had been sent to the French court, where Francis had shown great favour to the spirited and clever lad. There, too, he must often have seen Duchess Margaret, then a charming young married woman, the centre of a brilliant court, whom he should now meet in her widowhood, mournful and sick at heart.

But if he found her no longer the star of a court, he found her the heroine of Europe. Her embassy, though seemingly fruitless, had at least established her devotion and her address. Charles V. declared he had not thought it possible a woman could speak so well. Young Henry d'Albret, impetuous, and always ready to fall in love, gave the reins to his admiration for this brave and tender woman. They had many adventures to tell each other; many an instance of the Emperor's perfidious coldness. Margaret, who ever since her journey into Spain hated Charles with a vigorous hatred strange in that kindly heart, found ample sympathy in Henry d'Albret, to whom the Emperor was not merely an ungenerous captor, but the usurper of his kingdom.

Another occasion for friendship lay in the tolerance with which the young King viewed the new ideas of reform. Béarn had never been a narrowly Catholic state; Margaret, often sorely grieved by the cruel

* The traditional date of this escape, 11th April 1525, followed by Génin, must be inexact, since in a letter to Helié André, dated 27th December 1525, at St. Just-sur-Lyon, Henry d'Albret narrates his escape as having happened a few days before.

Digitized by Google

intolerance of her brother and the Cardinal de Tournon, must have turned for sympathy to this young Béarnois who, like herself, dreaded the Inquisition as the deadliest blight that could fall on any kingdom.

Thus they had two essential points in common: unity of interests and religious sympathy. For the rest, Duchess Margaret was a charming woman of the world, socially and intellectually the superior of Henry; and she was the sister of the king whose influence was most necessary to him. He was an impetuous, brave, ambitious youth; sufficiently resembling her knightly ideal to attract her interest, unfortunate enough to command her compassion. He was poor and valiant, he was kind and just to his subjects; and these would be great merits in the eyes of Margaret. That he was headstrong, fickle, and violent was scarcely apparent; and he was so young. He had, indeed, much in his favour. "Had he not been so given to women as he was," says Bordenave, "he would have been irreprehensible. He loved his people like his own children." Margaret, listening to all his generous plans on behalf of his subjects, became warmly interested in their ardent and unfortunate young king. And he wished nothing more than to marry the only sister of the King of France.

But in this early spring of 1526 Margaret had much to do beside talking with Henry d'Albret. In February Anne de Montmorency returned to France, his ransom paid, with the news that Francis was concluding a treaty with Charles, to whose sister Leonor he had been formally betrothed on the 12th February. The approaching release of the King gave great satisfaction in France, but not the joy, the outburst of

Digitized by Google

thanksgiving with which she would have hailed it on the morrow of Pavia. The King's deliverance meant poverty and dismemberment to France; meant the imprisonment of the Royal princes. And it was barely four months since Francis had sworn that he would rather die in prison than subject her to such disgrace! The King was to be the King again; but no longer Ogier, no longer Roland. A note of satire pierces through the songs which the people made about their prince in his hard captivity:

Courrier qui porte lettre,
Retourne-t-en à Paris;
Et va-t-en dire à ma mère
Va dire a Montmorency,
Qu'on fasse battre monnoie
Aux quatre coins de Paris
S'il n'y a de l'or en France
Qu'on en prenne à Saint-Denis,
Qui le Dauphin on amène
Et mon petit fils Henry,—&c.

There is no condition he will not grant for freedom's sake.

It was not only gold, not only the Royal children that Charles demanded; he required the province of Burgundy. And those that surmised the contents of the peace could not know that the King in prison had signed before witnesses two secret protests, whereby he declared that a prisoner under lock and key is in no wise constrained to keep a forced obligation.

In this month of February, when Montmorency brought the news of the treaty into France, the children who were to be exchanged as hostages for their father were themselves very ill with measles (or so Margaret calls their illness, probably scarlatina) accompanied with long and severe fever. "Monsieur

Digitized by Google

d'Angoulême," she writes, "took it with a very bad fever; and then M. d'Orléans, but he was not so ill; and then Madame Madelaine, but very slightly; and lastly, for company's sake, M. le Dauphin, without either pain or fever. And now they all are quite cured and very well. And M. le Dauphin is doing wonders at his lessons, mixing with his schooling a hundred thousand other occupations; and there is no more question of flying into passions, but rather of all the virtues. M. d'Orléans (Henry) is nailed to his books, and says he will be good; but M. d'Angoulême (Charles) knows more than the others, and does things which seem rather prophecies than childish play; so much so, my lord, that you would be astonished to hear them. The little Margot is like me: she will not be ill. But here everyone tells me of her wonderful grace; and she becomes prettier than ever was Mademoiselle d'Angoulême."

As February passed away and the children recovered, Margaret had to prepare them for the change to come —for the price the two elder boys, Francis and Henry, were to pay for their father's freedom. She must have spoken to them of the ardent and chivalric Queen, the betrothed of their father, whose wards they were to be. On the 17th of March the exchange was made. The two children were taken to Bayonne, and thence to the river Bidassoa, between Fontarabia and Andail, near Saint Jean de Luz. They and their attendants embarked from the banks of Navarre at the same moment as the boat of Francis left the Spanish border. One moment's glimpse in passing, and the two melancholy children (one eight years old, one seven) were in a hostile country, in the hands of the Constable of Castile. One happy, careless

Digitized by Google

glance, and Francis was on the friendly shore, had leapt on his horse and made it prance and curvet as he cried: "Now, at last, I am a King again!"

Francis was not yet actually in his own kingdom, but in the territory of that young King, Henry d'Albret, who, with Margaret, was so anxiously waiting his arrival. Francis was at first indignant when he heard of the match that he was required to sanction; for Margaret, at this moment, was half-promised to the Emperor of Germany, to the King of England, and to Constable Bourbon. But, in the first moment of his return, he would not show himself ungrateful. Many friends awaited him at Bayonne, eager to clasp his hand again—Margaret, happy and well, whom he had last seen so miserable in his prison at Madrid, and Henry d'Albret, his fellow-captive at Pavia, now his host. There were also Louisa, his mother, the faithful and politic regent; and Montmorency, who had concluded the negotiations that Margaret had begun. Two women, moreover, eager and fearful beyond the rest, watched the King, and watched each other, to see which he first would greet. Francis turned at last, and, passing by Madame de Chateaubriand without a word, went up to a blonde and handsome Norman lady, Mademoiselle Anne du Heilly de Pisseleu, a maid of honour to his mother, a talkative, lively creature, suspected of Huguenotism, to whom he had written a letter in verse from Madrid.

Now Francis had recovered kingdom, freedom, mother, sister, mistress, and friends; but the price was still to be paid—not only the ransom of two million golden crowns, but the province of Burgundy. As for Burgundy, Francis intended to leave that debt

Digitized by Google

unpaid. He displayed to his Parliament the two secret protests that he had made in prison; he called a Council of Notables at Cognac, who voted unanimously against the separation of their province from the realm of France. The Pope, the Parliament, France at large, approved the non-execution of the treaty. "A captive in bondage," cried Francis, "has no honour, and can bind himself to nothing." But, if the province was not ceded, a paladin surely would have returned to his prison, even as John of Burgundy returned to London.

"Nay," cried Francis; "John found in Edward a generous conqueror, who lodged him in his palace, admitted him to his table, and to all the amusements of his Court; therefore, John treated Edward as an equal and a friend. But the Emperor, forgetful of our kinship, forgetting that prisons were made for criminals and not for kings, made me feel all the horrors of a dungeon, and barbarously caused me to despair. How many times have I not told him that I had but the usufruct of my realm, and could not act without my subjects and my laws? But his blind cupidity has taken himself in his own net."

The indignation of Charles availed little. Rome, England, Turkey, all sent expressions of their sympathy to Francis. All that Charles could do was to take the French attendants of the little princes and send them to the galleys. As for the children themselves, they were safe in the charge of Leonor.

Francis, at home, was King of France again—King of France, but no paladin of chivalry. Perhaps the worshipping eyes of Margaret, who had so praised him for his deed of abdication, perplexed him now in his royal state at Fontainebleau; or perhaps he only

Digitized by Google

wished to reward the devoted sister who had dared so much for him. For some reason, Francis withdrew his opposition to the marriage of the Duchess Margaret with the King of Navarre. He showered presents and royal promises on his sister and her lover, assuring them that he would reconquer the lost province of Navarre from Spain for Henry d'Albret. The other pretenders to Margaret's hand had all withdrawn. A chill enmity separated Charles from France; Henry of England, preferring the maid to the mistress, had set his lustful heart upon Anne Boleyn; Constable Bourbon, in this very year, was killed while leading his victorious armies on to the sack of Rome; and on the 24th of January 1527, Margaret was married to the young King of Navarre.

It was a strange, impoverished, beautiful kingdom to which Henry d'Albret took his bride, in the autumn of the year, when they were weary of the festivals of France—a new and almost a foreign country. "I have been here five days," says Margaret, writing in October from Béarn, "and I scarce begin to understand the language." In the north, all round the capital of Nérac, stretched the dreary Landes, wastes of ash-coloured sand, purpled here and there with heather, streaked with dark lines of pine-wood and forests of cork-oak, ended only by the horizon of the sea; miles of undulating, desolate heath, with here and there, cropping the scanty herbage, a flock of sheep, guarded by a shepherd rudely clad in skins—a strange figure against the sky as he strode over the sand and over the bushes on the enormous stilts the peasants use there. And Pau, the southern capital, was no less different to the placid and splendid courts of France—a high-lying,

Digitized by Google

steep little town, with a small fortress-like castle, and beyond, the white serrated peaks of the Pyrenees, full of robbers then, and of bears and wolves, with all round, in the lower hills, villages, where lived those poor and swarthy peasants whose language Margaret could not understand. For some years she did not love this sharp, foreign, mountain country; she stayed there but for a month or two in the year, fleeing gladly back to Fontainebleau, where her brother was turning the great hunting-lodge of the French kings into a summer-palace more magnificent than dreams.

For home was still to Margaret in France. She had no children in her Castles of Béarn. Her little son had died soon after birth. Her daughter, Jeanne, was not quite two years old when Francis placed the poor solemn baby in a castle of her own at Plessis-les-Tours, afraid to leave her with her parents, lest Henry d'Albret should betroth her to a prince of Spain. Margaret was childless, and her husband was unfaithful. Still, after a few years' marriage, her thoughts began to turn towards her distant subjects of Béarn.

For there was no great need of her at the Court of France. Leonor had come from Spain, bringing back the two little princes; but she came home to find her husband fickle and unfaithful, and no disappointment is so embittered as that of the disillusioned idealist. The ardent, chivalrous Leonor was a disappointed woman. Still, she had a certain hold upon her husband, though infinitely less than belonged to pretty Anne de Pisseleu, now Duchess d'Étampes and the King's acknowledged mistress. Francis had these two women; Louisa had her son, her political ambition, and her grandchildren; the very children themselves had a new mother. So Margaret began to listen to the impatience of her

Digitized by Google

husband, eager to be back among his own people, dumbly enraged with Francis who had taken his infant daughter from him. Thus, in the end of the year 1530, it happened that the King and Queen of Navarre went back into their own country, and ruled their kingdom from their Court of Nérac.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

NÉRAC IN 1530.

Ci entrez, vous, qui le sainct Evangile
En sens agile annoncez, quoi qu'on gronde.
Céans aurez un refuge et bastille.
* * * *
Ci entrez, vous, dames de hault parage
En franc courage. Entrez y en bon heur
Fleurs de beaulté, à céleste visage,
A droict corsage, a maintien preude et sage.
En ce passage est le séjour d'honneur.
* * * *
Ci entrez, vous, et bien soyez venus,
Et parvenus, touts nobles chevaliers.
Frisques, galliers, joyeux, plaisants, mignons,
En général tous gentils compagnons.

So runs the inscription over the door of the Abbey of Thelema. Whether in designing that perfect Court, whose motto was *Fay ce que vouldras,* since the virtuous wish nothing else but honour, whose splendour outrivalled Bonnivet or Chantilly, whose library contained all books of Greek, Hebrew, Latin, and French, Spanish and Tuscan, where Lutheran refugees were received and honoured, where all the ladies were noble

Digitized by Google

and honourable, and all the knights were sprightly and joyous: whether in designing this Abbey of Thelema, Rabelais had in mind the little Court of Nérac, we cannot here decide. Let us only say that to the Queen of Navarre, *Esprit abstraict ravy et estatic*, Rabelais dedicated the third book of his *Pantagruel*; that he was protected by her friends the three Du Bellays; that he was intimate with Clément Marot, with Étienne Dolet, with Desperriers and Calvin, and others of the persecuted scholars whom she protected. And let us own that much such a Court as Thelema was held at the castles of Nérac and of Pau; a Court of scholars, of poets and thinkers, who fled thither from the stake or from the dreadful convent *in pace*; a court of charming women, at once good and gay; and of men as light-hearted as the King, and as courteous as the Queen.

Henry and Margaret, early estranged at heart, had one great interest in common: the desire to improve this desolate princedom of Béarn. Henry, at his own cost, drained and cultivated the sandy Landes, planted them with vineyards and cork-oak woods, and imported labourers from Saintonge. Henry built a great cloth-mill, and taught his subjects how to weave the fine Pyrennean wool they sheared from their mountain herds. Henry established courts of justice throughout his kingdom, and reformed the ruin and disorder into which the whole land had fallen. And Margaret rebuilt the castles of Nérac and of Pau, and adorned them with the famous library that she bequeathed to Fontainebleau, founded hospitals and orphanages throughout her kingdom. Margaret succoured the poor, herself visiting the sick and consoling them. Finally, she made of this nook of Southern France

Digitized by Google

(always hostile to the power of Rome and even now counting its Protestants by thousands) a refuge for whosoever was persecuted, and whosoever was poor or oppressed.

There was much need of such an asylum, for the hatred of the Sorbonne towards the new ideas became with every month more virulent and more capable. In the preceding year, in 1529, Margaret herself, in continued supplication, had been unable to save Loys Berquin, a learned gentleman of Artois, from the stake. He had been burned alive; and the flames of this bonfire lit up many pale and scared faces throughout the whole of France. Roussel, Lefêbvre, Calvin, Baduel, d'Arande, all her old friends and her masters of Meaux; Marot, Desperriers, Antoine Heroet, gay young poets and gallants in her service, suspected of heresy no less than she herself, all these and many others looked to Margaret in anxious appeal. In settling at Nérac, she made a welcome home for all of these. The children of her adoption, and the children of her bearing had alike been taken from her. Margaret at Nérac received all that were exiled and all that were oppressed to be as her sons and her daughters.

Queen Margaret made the exiled Roussel Bishop of Oloron; though he preached in lay dress, and in the tongue of the people. She had Lutheran services held in the castle. Calvin, Michel d'Arande, and Lefêbvre she sheltered in her house. She paid the schooling of Baduel and other young divines. Her court was a home and a refuge for all who fled the wrath of the Sorbonne. Clément Marot, poet and Lutheran suspect, who had been her secretary at Alençon, was made her Gentleman of the Chamber at

Digitized by Google

Nérac; together with Bonaventure Desperriers, *le joyeux Bonaventure,* whose atheism had brought him into almost equal disrepute. Thus Nérac gradually became an asylum, not only for austere reformers, scholars, and thinkers, but for the lightest singers of airy badinage, the wittiest and most frivolous of men of letters. For all alike were suspected in the eyes of the Sorbonne; and, as Melancthon wrote, "all students and all scholars having the title of Frenchmen put their natural hope in her Majesty, as in a divinity." But the court was not entirely made of theologians and poets, and was by no means a haunt of pedants alone. Many charming ladies, whose names we still remember, added a charm to the safety of that refuge; ladies whom Marot celebrated in his clear, neat, crystalline verses; ladies who, at Margaret's feet, presided over what was virtually the last of the old French Courts of Love: Hélène de Tournon, the beautiful and witty niece of the Cardinal-Minister of Francis; the gentle Florette de Sarra, whom Margaret loved, and whose name alone remains to us; and, fairest of all, Isabeau d'Albret, the sister of the King; "*Isabeau, ceste fine mouche,*" whose white throat and large eyes, whose sweet manners and girlish queenliness, are familiar to us even now, whose *petit ris follastre* rings still through Marot's verse, Isabeau, whose love-match with M. de Rohan, an impoverished Breton noble, whose debts, disasters, and ruin, made for many years the chief care of her kind and active sister-in-law. For it was Margaret who succoured the charming, thoughtless girl in all her misfortunes, settled her affairs, sheltered her homeless head, and brought up her children as they had been her own.

Margaret had helped the match between Isabeau

Digitized by Google

and her lover M. de Rohan. To Margaret Francis applied whenever the necessities of the court required some difficult alliance, some rebellious young people to persuade, some ruthless parent to soften. She was a kindly match-maker; and though she preached implicit obedience to authority, she would not interfere between lovers: "Between ourselves," she says, "we poor homely women understand not how to spoil such honest love." She was, indeed, the natural protectress of young people: her niece Madelaine, in love with the King of Scotland, betrothed elsewhere; Isabeau de Rohan, falling from misfortune to misfortune, till she becomes the poorest gentlewoman in France; Margaret of France, wan with grief for the death of her sister, the Scottish Queen; Mademoiselle d'Estouteville refusing to marry a man who does not love her; the orphan Charlotte de Laval: all these young girls, and many others, whose names and characters grow familiar to us through the letters of Margaret, are sheltered, as it were, under the folds of her mantle, as the virgins of Saint Ursula in the pictures at Cologne.

In the refined, artificial society of Nérac, old forms of gallantry survived and new ones were invented. "For with regard to gallantry," said Brantôme, "this Queen knew more about it than about her daily bread." The romantic, mystical temper of Margaret, which found no pleasure in the actual looseness of the times, was strongly attracted to the semi-chivalrous rites which were the dangerous shadow of that laxity. The court of Nérac was a veritable *Puy d'amour*. The heart no less than the soul was regent there; and though Margaret had no lovers, she had more brothers by alliance, sons by alliance, platonic enthusiasts, and adoring protégés than any other queen in Europe:—

Digitized by Google

Par alliance ay acquis une sœur
Qui en beauté, en grâce et en doulceur
Entre ung millier ne trouve sa pareille;
Aussi mon cueur à l'aymer s'appareille
Mais d'estre aymé ne se tient pas bien seur.

"And so my heart prepares to love her, but is not sure of being loved." This is the tenor of all contemporary verses rhymed to Margaret, whose bitter-sweet favours Jacques Pelletier deplored. Marot calls her, in reproachful admiration, "*La mal-mariée qui ne veult faire amy,*" and his poems to her breathe a surprised respect. But though the Queen of Navarre was actually a very virtuous woman, we cannot but own that this dangerous atmosphere of Nérac, this subtle intermingling of mysticism and gallantry did gradually vitiate the purity of her thoughts, and prepared the correspondent of Briçonnet to become the author of the *Heptameron*.

The wife of Henry d'Albret, the unchilded mother of Jeanne, the absent sister of Francis, had need of such unsubstantial and flimsy affections to stuff an unsatisfied heart. The young King of Navarre, eleven years younger than his wife, was very early tired of conjugal fidelity. A vain, fluent, boastful creature, with the eloquent mediocrity of the Méridional, he was at once proud and jealous of the ascendancy of Margaret; and more than once it needed the interference of Francis to persuade this agile, talkative, brilliant young King, with his facile violence and his easy repentance, to treat his faded wife with due respect.

But if the home of Margaret at Nérac was neither quite happy nor quite free from dangerous tendencies, it was a shelter for many who otherwise must have perished. Not entirely noble in itself, it was yet a

Digitized by Google

radiating centre of benevolence and humanity. The Renaissance of Letters, frightened from Paris by the fires of the Sorbonne, took shelter in the castle there; and when that refuge grew too dangerous, the mistress of Nérac gave her guests the means to travel to safer places, despatching Marot to Ferrara, Calvin to Geneva, others whither was best for them; sending as much as four thousand francs at once to the refugees in Switzerland. For all the artificial chivalry, the elderly philandering, which disfigured the purity of Nérac, it was truly the "sojourn of honour." The young were safe there, the old were sheltered there. And this court of literary exiles was none the less the heart of its country; thence justice and law, active beneficence, wealth, and civilisation were circulated through Béarn and Navarre, making of a half-savage kingdom a prosperous and happy place. And so, this little court of Nérac persuades us that a movement—that a woman—intrinsically a little artificial, lax, and worldly, may none the less, by the sheer force of human tenderness, become the salvation of things nobler than itself.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

(1529–1535.)

THE SORBONNE.

No less at Fontainebleau than at Nérac, Queen Margaret was the patron of the Renaissance, and the champion of the learned. She fostered the natural love of Francis for art and letters, and encouraged him to defy the restrictions and rigid dogma of the Sorbonne. Francis, who was sensitive to any interference with his kingship, was easily convinced that the Sorbonne lessened his authority by its presumption; and in such a mood his sister found it easy to persuade him to found a secular college in Paris, to confer an eternal benefit on Learning.

Margaret was not alone in her endeavour. Jean du Bellay, the younger brother of the vigilant Guillaume and the wise Martin, was Cardinal of Paris. He was suspected of a leaning to Reform; it was even said that, spite of his red hat, he was secretly married to Madame de Châtillon, the excellent governess of Margaret. He was a brilliant, adequate, and tolerant statesman and scholar. His influence, it is needless to say, with that of his two brothers, was ever thrown into Margaret's scale. The Renaissance in France

Digitized by Google

had no more energetic champions than the three Du Bellays.

Guillaume Budé, the great Greek scholar, who, on his wedding-day lamented that he had but six hours left for study, was the librarian of Francis. Pedant as he was, narrow and dogmatic humanist, he was none the less devoted to the cause of learning. He did good work in the revival of Letters. Among other scholars, says a contemporary, Budé shone as the sun among the stars. To him, to Jean du Bellay, to the Queen of Navarre, Michelet gives the triune glory of founding the College of France. This is a little hard on Francis, who already in 1521 was inspired with this idea; it is, however, safe to say that to these three persons belongs the honour of infusing into the volatile king, sufficient energy and hardihood to make so fine a thought a deed.

Margaret, Cardinal du Bellay, Budé, these were undoubtedly the guides and inspirers of Francis. But there was a whole public seconding them, demanding their succour, crying for safety and legality. Paris was full of men of learning, even as Fontainebleau of architects and painters. Étienne Poncher, Bishop of Paris, Loys de Ruzé, a president of Parliament, were the leaders of a circle abounding in wisdom and enterprise. The Estiennes, the learned printers whose wives and children could all speak Latin, to whom is due the New Testament of Lefêbvre d'Étaples, the first book of the Reformation, these men, workmen and scholars at once, learned, heroic in their patience and labour, had gathered about them a society of humanists and doctors, to whom they submitted the texts issued by their press. Lascaris the Greek, Oronce Finée the mathematician, Rhenanus, the historian of Ger-

Digitized by Google

many, Alexander Rauconet, Musurus, Paul Paradis, Vatable, Toussaint, Danès, scholars and philologists, these men, who did for France what Pico and Politian did for Italy, gathered, as round a sanctuary altar, round this printing-press of the Estiennes. Through them, no less than through the humane Margaret, the brilliant Cardinal du Bellay, the profound Budé, it was rendered possible for Francis to found the College of France.

The university was no shelter to men such as these. "*Græcum est, non legitur,*" taught the Sorbonne; "*Cette langue enfante toutes les hérésies,*" preached the monks; and if Greek, the tongue of pagans, were forbidden, yet more intolerable was Hebrew, the language of the Jews. To shut France close within the narrow fold of Rome, ignorant of any tongue but her own, dreaming of no glory and no ideal but the supremacy of the Church; this was the aim of the Sorbonne. But the aim of the King was to throw wide every gate and break down every barrier, to open the East and welcome the learning of the Arab and the prowess of the Turk; to ransack the past for the guidance of the present; to establish a France which should face the glories of Greece and Rome and not be abashed: a France of palaces, peopled with artists and scholars, splendid in battle, yet more redoubtable in her invincible peace; a Catholic France, which, holding one hand to Soliman, the other to the heretic North, should reconcile humanity.

For eight years the King, a true Valois, audacious in conceiving, slow in the act, had revolved in his mind this glorious idea. In 1529, urged by Margaret and the scholars of her court, he gave it the first germ-like shape. No sooner was it founded, than far and

Digitized by Google

wide through Europe spread the fame of the brilliant secular College of France. Year by year, as its fame and its students increased, chairs and endowments were added to the first poor foundation. In 1529, the College begins with a professor of Greek and one of Hebrew: that is all. By 1530, two chairs for Greek, two for Hebrew, one for mathematics. In 1534, Latin follows; medicine and philosophy in 1540; these are quickly succeeded by endowments for jurisprudence, for Arabic and Syriac. Physiology, the rights of man, the East — these are the doors opened by the new secular college. In these twelve years the destiny of the genius of France is decided, the character of France has shown its bent.

To this impulse the Sorbonne opposed itself with violence and fury. "If we may believe our masters," says the contemporary *Histoire Ecclesiastique*, "to study Greek and to meddle, let it be never so little, with Hebrew, is one of the greatest heresies of the world." And Henri Estienne, in his apology for Herodotus, complains that Greek and even Latin are esteemed "*luthéranifiques et hérétifiques*." To such an extent, he adds, that Master Béda, in the presence of King Francis, first of the name, retorted to the late Guillaume Budé that Hebrew and Greek would be the source of many heresies. In this way learning and science were tabooed as Lutheran. It is necessary to insist upon this point in order to understand the ferocity of the Sorbonne; in order to appreciate the motive which, for the moment, fused the Renaissance with the Reformation. These humanists and pioneers, for the most part Jewish or foreign of origin, professed the Reformed faith as an excuse for lax Catholicism. On the other hand, the most earnest souls in France

Digitized by Google

looked to the New Ideas as an escape from the degrading laxities, the soulless unmeaning of sixteenth-century religion. They hoped for purification and reform in the Church itself; while the Patriots desired to see the restriction of the temporal power of Rome; both wished to decentralize the Church, to restore the Gallican branch to its old national position. All these different strains of dissent were firmly welded into one by the ignorant persecution of the Sorbonne. But this movement was not yet Protestant; it was still very practical, very undefined; little concerned with theories or ideas. "Thank heaven," cries Margaret, "we are none of us Sacramentarians!" To establish secular education, print the Bible in French, teach Greek and Mathematics, sustain the Gallican branch, this is the programme of the movement; this, and no actual schism. Briçonnet, Roussel, the Du Bellays, Margaret, did not desire or dream of a Church wholly severed from the Catholic authority. It was a sort of Home Rule which they demanded: to be Catholics, but reformed and Gallican Catholics. It was in truth Calvin the Frenchman, Calvin the man of system and practice, and not Luther the German, the mystic and prophet, who organized and consolidated the Protestant Church.

This point must never be forgotten in seeking to understand the history of Margaret of Angoulême. That life, else so hopelessly confused, so vacillating and effortless, becomes clear and definite when once we understand that not the Reformation but the Renaissance inspired it. Never was a spirit less dogmatic or insistent than hers. She was no martyr, no saint or prophetess. She was merely a woman filled by the new fervour for learning, the new reverence

Digitized by Google

for knowledge; the renascent love for art and poetry, no less than for ideas and for science. Under one wing she shelters Janet, Cellini, Marot, Desperriers; under the other, Calvin and Vatable. Full of imagination and keen intelligence, instinct with compassion and liberality, her nature would have been as much revolted by narrow Protestant dogma as by Catholic tyranny. Read the contemporary Lutheran historians, and it is clear that the ignorance and brutal injustice were not entirely upon the side of the Sorbonne. Coarseness and violence were as rife at Geneva as at Paris, and Margaret would not have been happy in Calvin's City of God. She would have pitied Servetus as sorely as she pitied Loys de Berquin. Her rare and modern spirit would ill have understood that hard-and-fast salvation of Geneva, that satisfaction in the damnation of disbelievers. Human life, knowledge, tolerance and freedom, were dearer to her than any code or any creed. In fact, her code and her creed was her belief in these things; her practice of human kindness. Those dying words of hers, so hushed-up, so indignantly refuted, express the principle of her life: "What I have done I did from compassion, not conviction."

At this moment, let us remember, Calvin is still in France, a youth of twenty; his *Institutio* is not written, Geneva is not yet a Church, Protestantism still is undetermined. Margaret and her court of scholars personify the earlier, vaguer Reformation. Mystical and learned, eager to discover the secrets of heaven and earth, they were more anxious to learn than to proselytize; and the College of France is the Church that they established.

It is important to insist on this eclectic and cultured

Digitized by Google

moment of the Reformation, because Margaret never outgrew it; and was condemned as an apostate by the later Protestants, who had advanced, merely for standing still. On the other hand, exasperated by the growth of heresy, the Court receded from its tolerant position. So that Margaret, who at this moment touches Calvin, as it were, on one hand, and the Court on the other, is gradually left at equal distance from either, suspected on both sides of half-heartedness and heresy.

This is indeed the climax of her influence, the most brilliant moment of her career. From among her servants and her masters are sought the staff of the College of France. Toussaint and Danès had taught her a little Greek; it is said that Paul Paradis had given her lessons in Hebrew. Henri Estienne was under her protection, no less than Vatable, Lascaris, and Aleander. Marot, the Lutheran poet, her *valet-de-chambre*, is entrusted to rewrite in modern French the ancient masterpieces of the quickly-growing language. She is the centre of the movement; the King himself is under her influence. The Sorbonne, made keen by hate and fear, raises its threatening head, observes, and considers how to strike.

To strike was only self-preservation, so bold and rapid became the impulse towards reform. In December 1530, the Protestant princes of Germany entered into a league, and signed the Treaty of Smalcald. England was on the point of actual revolt from the Roman sway, and France seemed like to do as much. The Emperor no less than the Sorbonne dreaded lest Francis should join the Protestant league. For the new ideas received every encouragement in Paris, and in September 1531 it seemed as if the last

Digitized by Google

check were removed with the death of Louisa of Savoy. While she had lived, the Catholic party had trusted to her influence on her son and daughter, who passionately loved her; but now the innovating Margaret, unrestrained by her mother, would sit, sole in influence, at the right hand of the King.

For an end had come to the passionate life of Madame. Her genius for intrigue, her scheming avarice, her intense and active nature, lay idle in the grave. She was loth to quit the stage on which she played so principal a part; all her sufferings had not reconciled her to the thought of rest. Constantly ill, never free from gout and colic, she was still resolved to act, to witness. But throughout the summer of 1531, Margaret's letters reveal to us the gradual wasting of the frame which contains this violent spirit. "She is not yet so strong as I desire." "Madame was yesterday so weak, I feared she would have fainted." "She is so variable." Margaret says no more than that in her fear to alarm her brother. But though she refrains from afflicting him more openly, she writes of nothing but her mother's health. To-day she is better, she had a good night, she will certainly recover; yet, ah! sometimes she seems so weak! Turning from the fierce history of those times, in which Margaret's gentle name, like a wing-bound dove, is bandied as a missile from one party to another, there is nothing more pathetic than to open the volume of her letters, to read these lines breathing love and anxiety, from which all else is banished, all hint of speculation, all interest in great affairs, to perceive this Lutheran heretic, hushed, self-unconscious, gentle, sitting by the bedside of the Catholic mother she adores, and gazing with anguish into the paling, dying face.

Digitized by Google

The death of Louisa gave a swift impetus to the movement of reform.

In 1533, Robert Estienne printed his Latin Bible. In the same year, a cooper's son from Noyon, a certain young Chauvin (or Calvinus, as he latinized the name), a Picard bourgeois, strong, hard, dogmatic, litigious, had composed a book, as yet only known in manuscript, the *Institutio Christianæ Religionis*. It was audaciously dedicated to the King, and bore the motto: *Non veni mittere pacem, sed gladium*. The Rector of the Sorbonne preached a sermon by this young Calvin to his scandalised magisters. What! was the heresy infesting their very stronghold? The imprudent Rector had to fly for his life to Switzerland. A warrant was issued against him; another against the obnoxious Calvin, who, less agile, was run to earth at Angoulême. Now let the Lutherans and Zwinglians behold to what ends led their monstrous opinions! Parliament, Sorbonne, all good Catholics, prepared for the auto and the triumph—when, at the last moment, their prey was wrested from them: Margaret, the pernicious Queen of Navarre, threw herself down before the King and entreated his pardon for Calvin. It was granted.

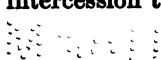
She was verily the head and front of the offending, this light-minded, mystical, learned young Queen of Navarre. At all costs, she must be warned, crushed, superseded. A little before this she had published at Alençon a poem, weak, mystical, inflated with a vague ideality: *Le Myrouer de l'Áme Pecheresse*. It would be hard, in this mist of nebulous piety, to name precisely any error of commission. But the Sorbonne, supremely irritated against Margaret, discovered therein divers heresies of omission. There

Digitized by Google

was no mention of the Saints in it, neither of Purgatory; the prayer to the Virgin, the *Salve Regina,* was paraphrased in honour of Jesus Christ. Here the prompt and aggressive Béda perceived his opportunity. In the next Index of the works forbidden to the faithful, the Sorbonne published the title of the *Myrouer de l'Âme Pecheresse.*

All this took place in 1533. Francis, ever devoted to his sister, still devoted to the cause of progress and tolerance, ruminating an alliance with Soliman and the Protestant League, was thunderstruck with indignation. He sent for the Rector of the Sorbonne and ordered a complete list to be made of those magisters who had composed the Index. He caused the Bishop of Senlis to defend the work before the University, which meekly retracted its accusation. The occasion was made into a triumph for Margaret.

Béda and his party were not silenced yet. A few weeks after this the students and four professors of the theological college of the Navarrene Fathers at Paris publicly performed a farce in the great hall of the building. Margaret was the heroine of this ingenious representation. In the first act she is represented as leaving her spindle and letting fall her distaff, to accept from an Infernal Fury a French translation of the four gospels; Margaret then becomes herself a Fury, a spirit of controversy and bitterness, devoured by insensate tyranny, infected with the cruelty of Hell. Such was the movement of the play; such the portrait of the endearing and sweet-hearted sister of the King. Francis was terribly incensed. He sent the four Navarrene Fathers to the prison of the Conciergerie, whence only at Margaret's most earnest intercession they were, after some days, set free. Béda



Digitized by Google

suffered at greater length. Suspicious, either that the farce was performed at his instigation, or else that he was actually the author of it, the King sentenced the combative syndic to two years of exile.

The Sorbonne was in despair. It did, indeed, appear impossible to assail this high-throned heretic; moreover, the exile of Béda struck their weapon from their hands. For a while all was quiet. Then an event occurred to set the Protestants hopelessly in the wrong. Whether laid in train by the coarser and more blundering Reformers, or the fruit of unscrupulous Catholic zeal, none may decide.

During the night of the 18th October 1534, the doors of the cathedral and town halls of Paris, Rouen, Meaux, and other cities, even to the gates of the castle of Amboise where was the King, were covered with placards, assailing in the grossest terms the mysteries of the Catholic faith, denying the Mass, the Host, the prayers for the dead: whatever was held most mystical and sacred. Nothing could be more brutal than the feeling which prompted this offence, unless it be the feeling which punished it. All that was tender and holy was publicly outraged here; the mysterious sacrifice of the Mass, the faith that rescued the dear but sinful dead from the pains of Purgatory. More than this. In Paris there stood an image of the Mother and Child, held especially venerable and beloved. Many prayers were addressed to this succourable Madonna; her image in the public street brought to the roughest heart a reminder of gentleness and purity. This dawn of the 19th October shone upon a desecrated shrine. The head of the Virgin, the head of the Babe, had been rudely chopped from the trunks, and lay, fallen and mutilated, in the gutter. When the King heard

Digitized by Google

of it, he burst into tears. That cruel blunder, that heartless revenge, lost the cause of the Reform. Many a stake should smoke, and many a rack should strain and creak, in expiation for that murdered stone.

This affair of the placards sent a horror pulsing throughout the length and breadth of France. It frightened from the Reform its gentler and more reverent adherents. Margaret herself, ever compassionate, felt it necessary to declare her Catholicism to the world. Francis henceforth became no less combative than the Sorbonne itself. He set out at once for Paris to sift the matter. No sooner had he reached the capital than in the space of a single night the placards burst out again in hideous flower. They were on all the buildings, all the churches. Even into the King's cabinet they brought their obscene and scurrilous defiance. A vague fear and horror took possession of the town. All through France throbbed that sense of outraged pity for the murdered Redeemer which lay at the bottom of mediæval persecution, blent with that maddening terror of Supernatural Evil, which gave their keenest edge to the cruelties that punished witchcraft. Heresy was, indeed, a sort of witchcraft, a spell wasting the souls of men before the fires of Hell, even as the grosser witches knew how to make men's bodies melt and wane. It is difficult now to place ourselves in this attitude; yet, unless we do so, we can never understand the lesson of the past.

When the King heard of the Virgin's mutilated image, he burst, as I have said, into tears. But his anger was not to end in weeping. A severe inquiry was instituted, and all accused of complicity in this matter were brought to Paris and tried there. The party of the Sorbonne pretended that they had dis-

Digitized by Google

covered a Protestant plot to murder all good Catholics while at Mass. Nothing can be less founded than such a charge, obviously trumped up to secure a conviction. Without it the conviction was secure. Twenty-four of the accused were sentenced to be burnt to death.

On the 29th January 1535, a great expiatory procession traversed Paris from the Louvre to the Church of Nôtre Dame. The King walked in this procession, bare-headed, holding in his hand a lighted torch. He was followed by his children and the flower of his court. His beautiful mistress was there, with Queen Leonor and many fair and joyous ladies; but Margaret had returned to Navarre. She had left Paris, heavy-hearted, some weeks before, seeing, as it seemed, all her dreams of wide culture, beneficence, and toleration crumble suddenly into nothing, and the old reign of Darkness engulf the world once more. Indeed, on that morning of the 21st January 1535, the Renaissance, the College of France, the treaty with the Turks, appeared shocking and anomalous; for Paris had returned to mediævalism. It might have been Louis XI. and not King Francis who walked there bare-headed, holding his lighted torch. To the sound of solemn chants, the procession wound through the streets. Not only the court was there, and the King and Queen, and the two hundred gentlemen of the royal household, but the whole Sorbonne (triumphant over the absent Queen of Navarre), the Clergy of Paris, the Swiss Guards, the Heralds, the Court of Parliament, the Municipality, the Guilds of Capital, the Courts of the Realm. It was a procession of several thousand persons, all alike in their pity and their burning indignation, that marched from the

Digitized by Google

Louvre to Nôtre Dame. When we realise this, we understand the sequel; we understand how little yet, for all its brilliant veneer of culture, France was impregnate with the true modern spirit. The Middle Ages were reared up close behind, and their tremendous shadows fell across that world to darken it.

At Nôtre Dame there was High Mass; thence the procession moved to the Bishop's palace, where, seated on a throne, the King addressed the multitude. In his words, burning, thrilling with mediæval passion, we catch no echo of the familiar speech of the Father of Letters. The debonnair, free-thinking dilettante of the Renaissance has disappeared; the mutilated image of the Virgin has roused in his place the latent fanatic, present ever behind the most modern shows of the double-natured sixteenth century. Louis the Saint or Louis the Cruel might have spoken as he spoke. So easily a strong passion refutes the painful progress of centuries.

The multitude stood in the hall and in the court outside; the King on his raised throne spoke to them, the tears in his eyes. He spoke of the blasphemy and profanation, and of that day's expiation. He denounced the enemies of God and the Church. "And if my own right arm," he cried at last, "were infected with this heretic pestilence, I would cut it off and cast it from me; and if one of my own children were so miserable as to favour it, I would with my own hand sacrifice him to God's justice and my own."

Ominous words for the absent and suspected Queen of Navarre. The Sorbonne, listening, must have triumphed; for those wise magisters did not yet know how volatile were the moods of their brilliant King. For the moment there was no more fiery Catholic than

Digitized by Google

Francis. He went himself, with the ladies of his court, with the fervent outraged Leonor and the laughing Madame d'Étampes, to see them light the pile where six of the accused should suffer that evening. Throughout December the Autos had flamed and smoked; already ten Lutherans had died that winter at the stake. In general they suffered singly; but to honour so tremendous an occasion, no less than six could die.

"Three Lutherans," says the Bourgeois of Paris, "and a clerk of the Châtelet, and a fruiterer, and the wife of a cobbler and a schoolmaster; this last for eating meat on Fridays." These were to be the victims. They were fastened by long iron chains to a lofty gibbet, and swung to and fro in and out of the burning fire. Madame d'Étampes is said to have complained of the sickening odour of the burning flesh; of the horrible sight of the convulsed and blackened bodies. Poor, easy-natured Anne de Pisseleu, yourself suspected of Lutheran leanings, the spectacle may well have turned you faint with fear and horror! But the Bourgeois of Paris does not mention the presence of the King at the actual sacrifice. The Court, I incline to believe, turned home before it came to that.

Throughout the spring the stakes are constantly piled, the gibbets swing their smoking freight to and fro. And, whereas in the earlier months the victims were humble and ignorant folk, as time goes on we note a richer prey. In November "a cobbler's son," "a printer," "a mason," "a tailor," "a young servant": in such wise run the entries. But in the spring: "a rich merchant, from fifty to sixty years of age, *estimé homme de bien*," "a goldsmith," "a painter," "a young Italian merchant," "a scholar," "one of

Digitized by Google

the King's choristers," "an attorney." Here it is the middle-class that is attacked.

Nor was this all. Not only life but reason was menaced. On the 26th February the King suspended the action of the Press. No more books were to be printed. So ordained the friend and patron of the Estiennes, the Founder of the College of France. But the thing was impossible; France could no longer live, work, pursue her daily affairs, without the Press. Not only Jean du Bellay and the learned Budé, but even the reactionary Parliament protested against so grotesque a prohibition. The King was content with imposing a censorship of the Press.

So completely had Francis turned upon his steps. Perhaps we find the reason in the fact that Béda, the intrepid Béda, returned from exile in 1535, accused the King himself of leaning towards heresy. Francis threw the rash syndic into prison again; obliged him to do public penance, in a sheet and holding a candle; finally confined him in the prison of Mont St. Michel, where the cutting winds and stormy weather of the ensuing spring cooled for ever the fiery heart of Béda. But Francis, though avenged, was not appeased. A horror of his own laxity was upon him. Still the persecution continued; till finally the Protestants of Germany complained of his rigour towards unfortunates whose only crime was professing the religion which they themselves, the King's allies, believed. They also deplored the rumoured alliance between Francis and Soliman. The King's answer has been preserved. He, to some extent, admits a friendly intention towards the Porte, acknowledging that he had received the Turkish Ambassador. The Emperor, he reminds them, had done as much; and it is well

Digitized by Google

to abstain from war with the Turk. As for the penalties he had, against his will and nature, inflicted on his Lutheran subjects, it was rather their sedition than their religion which he had punished. So little objection had the King to the convictions of his allies, that he would willingly receive any theologian that they might choose to send to his court.

This is in the summer of 1535. Another wind blows, and the weather-cock King has veered from his pathos and horror of January. On the eve of a new war with the Emperor, Francis desires to conciliate the German princes. His keen and subtle political instinct recalls him from the dreary paths of Spain.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

(1536–1538.)

CHANGES.

On the field of Pavia, Francis had sent his ring to Soliman. The King had established the College of France, in spite of the Sorbonne. In defiance of the Church, he had endowed two chairs of Greek. In founding two Professorships of Hebrew, he had taken its reproach and its squalor from the Ghetto. The Jews, the learned, these two persecuted and endangered peoples he had glorified and reassured. In sending his ring to Soliman, Francis embraced the last enemy of mediæval Christendom—the Turk.

In the Turk Francis perceived the one ally that could truly aid him against the Emperor. Venice, the enlightened eye of Europe, already perceived the undue predominance of Austria, and saw in Soliman the natural balance. With Venice, whose trade required the Porte; with England, whom the Church no more controlled; with Scotland, Denmark, and the Saxon princes—France might head a formidable confederation, a capital danger to the Empire and the Inquisition. Such a league was the dream of the

Digitized by Google

sixteenth century, from the Battle of Pavia in 1525 to the renewed project of Spires in 1573. But, as a rule, the Christian princes were as parochial in their hatred of the East as in their yet bitterer hatred of Christian heresy. The Catholic hated the Turk and the Huguenot—the Huguenot the Catholic and the Turk. It was the merit of Francis to rise above sectarian considerations, to propose a great political alliance between the Protestant North, and Catholic Venice, and Catholic France, and Mahommedan Turkey. Such an alliance would have been the last word, the greatest masterpiece of the Renaissance. Humanity, tolerance, freedom of judgment, would have been naturalized thereby in Europe, and the dreadful history of the 17th century might have had a different record. But the thing was difficult beyond belief, for each State suspected the other, and all alike suspected Soliman. He was reckoned, as in their State-papers England and Spain and Germany alike conspire to name him, "the Turk, the Common Enemy." Francis would find it no easy task to make the most enlightened kingdoms of Europe accept his alliance.

For great and deep spread the horror of the Turk. Venice was too wise, England too far to share it, save in a nominal and intermittent fashion; but in Germany the dread of Soliman was as natural and fierce as superstition. Nor was this wholly an unreasonable fear. Selim was dead and gone, and in these later days the Ottomans themselves were admirably well disciplined and merciful. In 1526 two hundred thousand Turks traversed the Empire; they marched along the roads, avoiding the fields lest they should ruin the harvest. Not a village was burned, not a hamlet plundered. Any soldier caught in the

Digitized by Google

act of pillage was hung to the trees by the roadside, whatsoever his rank or station. In 1532 Captain Rincon, the envoy of Francis, visited the prodigious camp of Soliman, thirty miles in extent. "Astonishing order, no violence. Merchants, women even, coming and going in perfect safety, as in a European town. Life as safe, as large and easy as in Venice. Justice so fairly administered that one is tempted to believe the Turks are turned Christians now, and the Christians Turks."

The Turks themselves were just, wise, moderate, and humane. But, alas! the Turkish armies were not all composed of Turks. The fierce Algerian pirates, slave-dealers, kidnappers of boys and women, were the allies of Soliman. The terrible Khair-Eddin Barbarossa bore the title of Turkish Admiral. This should have been the double and exacting task of Francis: to reassure Europe against the Turk, to secure Soliman while excluding Barbarossa.

The first step on this errand he had taken on the morrow of his capture at Pavia, when, drawing from his finger his last possession, he had said to his attendant, "Take this to the Sultan!" The second step was passed in this year 1536, when, on the eve of battle with Charles, Francis signed a secret treaty with Soliman. The third step, the open acknowledgment and precision of that treaty, was still to be taken, if ever it should be taken.

"The Venetians are nowe al Turkiche and alienated from th' Emperour utterly," writes Harvel, so late as the spring of 1539; "and I am of constant opinion that the French State seketh to perturbate the world in th' Emperour's detriment." Indeed, while Francis and Rincon and Du Bellay were welding the French

Digitized by Google

treaty with the Turk, the Queen of Navarre was as busily employed in seeking to bring England into a French alliance. She herself interviewed the English Ambassadors, and in our collection of Foreign State-papers her name is at least as frequently quoted as the King's. "The Queen of Navarre is a right English woman," said Francis to Sir William Paget. "She is always a member of the King's Secret Council," writes Matteo Dandolo, Venetian Ambassador in France, "and, therefore, is obliged to follow the King wherever he goes, though narrow and inconvenient be her lodgings."

It was a hard life; but Margaret was happy in this career of active and beneficent devotion. In these years of work and counsel her letters are brilliant and contented—letters of how different a sort to those inspired by the quietism of her youth (1520–24), the unrest and superstition of her age (1547–48). In this year 1536, while the question of the Turco-Huguenot alliance was filling the secret counsels of France, war fell out again with the Emperor on the old question of the Milanese. The Queen of Navarre was now, perhaps, the busiest woman in France. Her letters are full of the details of the campaign. She encourages her husband and his kinsmen to raise experienced regiments for the war; she inspects the troops with her cousin, De Carman; she goes to suppress a rising of the disaffected Basques; she and Montpezat discover and interrogate a spy. And all the time she is investigating the ruined fortunes of Isabeau de Rohan; she is securing the advancement of her old play-mate, Anne de Montmorency; she is assisting her husband, and sounding his trumpet in the ears of Francis.

Digitized by Google

Henry of Navarre, in his quality of Governor of Guyenne, raised an army and led it to the southern frontier. Margaret's letters to Montmorency (very frequent at this moment) are full of allusions to her young husband, to his valour, his troops. We see in her mind the happy contrast that she makes between this eager service of the brave young King of Navarre and the cowardice and failure of the husband of her youth. Margaret, we feel, is no less anxious than her brother to wipe out, on a fresh field, the disgraces of Pavia.

"I have had news," she writes to Montmorency, "of your soldier, the King of Navarre. He is, I fancy, on the march, for he has determined to depart without going to Bayonne—for by this time he has the letters in which I told him that the Emperor is at hand, and that you await him at the camp of Avignon. I am sure he will not fail you there. I pray you, my son, that you will hold him as a brother, for I am sure that you will find his love so good and firm that you will not repent you for having taken him to your heart."

The preparation for the campaign went on with enthusiasm. The army in Piedmont met with brilliant success. The camp on the frontier was impatient for battle.

"My Lord," writes Margaret to the King, "I came yesterday evening to this place of Monfrin (near Avignon), where is the division of the King of Navarre, which I have seen in battle array. I will say nothing of the men-at-arms; but there are few soldiers better mounted than our light horse. You will be pleased with the Gascons; and would to God the Emperor would try to cross the Rhone while I am here for,

Digitized by Google

with the succour you mean to send us (and but little is necessary!), I would gladly undertake, on my life —mere woman though I be—to keep him from passing."

The Emperor did not pass. His armies starved and thirsted on the devastated frontier. Victory attended the arms of the French; but Death, the faithful retainer, fought now, as ever, upon the Emperor's side. The war shrank into insignificance beside a blow that, not without suspicion of treason, changed the future of France.

For the young Dauphin, Francis, the idol of his father, the heir of the kingdom, suddenly died. He was sailing down the Rhone to join the King in the camp at Valence. He broke his journey at Lyons, and there, one day, being overheated from a game of tennis, he sent his page to draw him a cup of water from a well. It is probable the young prince succumbed to a violent pleurisy. But, when he died that night in extremity of torture, all France declared that Montecuculi, the Dauphin's cup-bearer, had smeared some Spanish poison of the Emperor's upon the edges of the cup.

More than mourning and anger were to come of this event. The Dauphin, Francis, had been, in mind as well as in body, singularly his father's child. He was of Francis's party: gay, chivalric, gallant, perhaps unstable, liberal, easy. But Henry, the second son, was now the heir. The unusual character of this youth of eighteen made him already remarkable at Court. Henry was taciturn, sardonic, melancholy.

"He seems all nerve," says Matteo Dandolo; "he is so strong and tall. But he is dark, pallid, livid—even green—and it is said he was never seen to laugh

Digitized by Google

a hearty laugh. Still, he is, in his way, a good companion to his own friends, and loves the liveliness of his younger brother. He has a small head, large eyes looking down, thin temples, and a narrow forehead. He is brave, and loves hunting and fighting; and he is very religious, and will not ride on Sundays."

Another Venetian ambassador adds a stroke or two to the portrait:—

"He is melancholy, saying little, and devoid of repartee; but when once he *has* said a thing he holds to it *mordicus*, for he is very clear and decided as to his opinions. He has a mediocre and rather slow intelligence. He is virtuous and reputable, and spends his money liberally but wisely."

"*Il est né Saturnien*," says Simon Renard—and truly the star of Saturn sheds its singular and pallid radiance upon his course. As a child his father had not loved him. "*Je n'aime pas*," he had said, "*les enfans songeards, sourdaudz et endormis.*" And dreamy, dull, and sleepy were still the manners of the Prince. Four years of his childhood had passed in the Spanish castle where he had been a hostage for the brilliant father who did not love him. And it was his destiny that he should henceforth detest the land of his captivity and make war upon it, while he himself was imbued with the spirit of it, while he himself should turn the volatile, spontaneous gallic character of his father's France into a thing as pallid, as precise, as decorous, as the Emperor's Spain. Under him the long reign of the *Style soutenu* begins in Art and Letters. He is slow, solemn, romantic, and yet conventional. In his long straight nose, his fine anxious brows, his singular large eyes, we see the evidence of a certain ideality, but no power to direct

Digitized by Google

it. "A saturnine," says Simon Renard; and another calls him, "a King of Lead." He is, indeed, save when in battle or following the hunt, an inert and sombre youth, with his crooked, sinister mouth, his black, straight hair, his lustreless, black eyes.

In 1533 the King, anxious to conciliate the Papacy, had married Henry to the heiress of Florence and Urbino, the Pope's niece, Catherine dei Medici, a plump child of fourteen, with full lips, large eyes, a retreating chin—a certain vulgar prettiness. She had caressing, charming manners, that made everyone at Court in love with her—except her sombre young husband, with his solemn air of a Spanish grandee, unapproachable and noble. For him his little bride, during her whole life, cherished a devoted passion, that was, perhaps, the only loveable thing in her career. But Henry was at first supremely disgusted with his marriage. Her quickness in pastimes, her lively manners, her neat-ankled prettiness, could not make him overlook the trading ancestry of his bride. Twenty years later the Venetian Ambassadors inform us that all the Court of France looked down on Catherine because she was not of royal blood:—

"She can never do them favours enough. If she gave away the whole of France, they would scarcely thank her, because she is a foreigner; and she has neither credit nor authority, since she is not of royal birth."

"Bah! it is only the shopkeeper's daughter!" said Madame Diane to the little Queen of Scots, more than twenty years after this. And, indeed, though a good enough match for the Duke of Orleans, little Catherine dei Medici, not beautiful even at

Digitized by Google

seventeen, was, doubtless, made to feel herself a very poor alliance for the heir of France. "They have smirched the Valois lilies with a mercantile alliance!" cried the Emperor. Henry was ashamed of his wife, and did not love her. As time went on, and the plain, bourgeoise, unlovely girl did not even give him an heir, he began to think of a divorce. But all the pride and all the real love of Catherine's heart arose and pleaded against him with King Francis. And Henry was finally brought to reason by a very great lady with whom he was in love, Diana of Poictiers, the widow of the great Seneschal of Normandy, and the daughter of that Saint Vallier who had nearly perished for the conspiracy of Bourbon. This most important and almost princely personage, though she called Catherine a daughter of shopkeepers, persuaded Henry to treat her better, and even to reward her with a moderate affection.

"It is wonderful how Madame la Sénéschale has made another man of him," says Marcus Cavalli. "He used not to love his wife at all, but was vain and full of mockery."

For Diana of Poictiers had an almost boundless influence over Henry. She was no longer young. At the time when Montmorency brought her and Henry together in his house at Écouen she was thirty-eight and he not quite eighteen years old. Everyone said that Henry would never fall in love; but Montmorency divined better. He determined to attach the young Prince to this woman, twenty years his senior, who was of Montmorency's party — a Catholic among Catholics, a Conservative, hating the Turco-Huguenot alliance, and hating Spain also, though filled with the spirit of Spain. Diana was still a very beautiful

Digitized by Google

woman. Her abundant hair, jet-black and curly (sometimes she dyed it red), made a frame for a pallid delicate face, beautiful with that peculiar Renaissance beauty, so illustrious and strange, which affects the imagination more strongly than the senses. Her lids were a little tight over the eyes; the small, close-shutting lips tight also; the straight, small nose prominent in profile; the delicate eyebrows arched and tense above the well-set eyes; the forehead round; the neck beautiful but slender; the whole face secret, unemotional, unexpressive, yet most provoking to the imagination.

The whiteness of her pale complexion was a special beauty of *la grande Sénéschale*. In some sort, her life was devoted to preserve it. Every morning she arose at early dawn, and bathed herself, winter and summer alike, with icy water. Then, by the light of the day-break, she went riding through the fields round Paris, or in the woods at Fontainebleau. Before the world awoke she was at home again, reading in her bed till noon. Then began her regular life of a great lady at Court, resolved to marry well her little daughters, resolved to keep her power as a beauty, to make herself a power in politics. Later on, we know that all the secrets of the State were debated in her house at Anet. Even then, we may be sure, no secret of the Catholic party was kept from her; and as soon as she became the mistress of Henry, she devoted herself to be his counsellor, his adviser, giving him wise instruction, and even lending him her money.

Catherine, seventeen years old, plump, merry, affectionate, had not known how to win her husband's love. It was different with Diana. The charm of an elder woman, her refined sweetness and delicate superiority,

Digitized by Google

were, perhaps, the only wiles that could have caught the Dauphin. And Diana, with the dignity, had not the disadvantage of her years. Hers was not the loveliness that fades with youth. Her penetrating Armida graces were unchanged, her grand style, her grave and delicate air, gained rather than lost by the sparer outlines and paler tints of waning youth. Tall and slender, she was ever soberly clad; she affected no rivalry with the cloth of gold and gems of younger beauties; she wore black and white in honour of her widowhood. When the Dauphin became her lover, she still wore her quiet weeds for her dead husband, and he also took for his badge the mourning-colours of the man he had supplanted; all the Dauphin's Court assumed the hues of widowhood.

No one seems to have found it strange. Diana was so inaccessible, so remote, and distant, that rumour itself could find no fault with her. She continued the most pious, the most Catholic, the wisest, the most respectable of ladies. Many said, and say, that she had conferred on Francis the affections that now she bestowed on his son. There is no evidence. There was no evidence then to what degree the Dauphin was her lover, though the Revolution which desecrated the grave of Diana and of two dead babies in her chapel at Anet has settled that question for a later world.

"She has undertaken," says Cavalli, "to indoctrinate the Dauphin, to correct and counsel him, and to urge him on towards all actions worthy of him."

The moon was her emblem, the crescent moon, with the equivocal device, "*Donec totum impleat orbem.*" And if the star of Saturn shone fitly on the Dauphin's birth, for her the natural planet was the pale, the solemn, the enchanting moon. Cold, narrow-hearted,

Digitized by Google

fanatic rather than religious, curious rather than impassioned, Diana was truly a daughter of the moon, a moon that stooped to kiss her gloomy young Endymion. The Dauphin fell at once under her enchantment. He was then eighteen; but when he died, twenty-three years later, King Henry II. was no less devoted. It was a possession rather than a passion. The amazed courtiers laughed in their sleeves. The country people, awe-struck by her name, said that she had enchanted Prince Henry with a philtre. They found her, in her lunar beauty, the image of that pale Diana of the Forests, whom witches hymn by night; and they declared that every morning of her life she drank a draught of molten gold.

This, in a sense, was true. Diana knew how to lend and how to give, but she knew still better how to grasp. Her delicate, tenacious hands filled themselves with the wealth and the power of France. She and Montmorency stood one on either side the melancholy Dauphin and whispered their counsels in his ears. Round them swiftly gathered a strange, sad, rigid, fanatic little Court, an assembly of the orthodox, the pious, the *bien pensants*, the centre of all that was Romanist and Latinist, a society illumined by the dubious crescent of Diana, and dressed all in black and white in honour of her widowhood.

Naturally, this new little Court gained immensely by the death of the Dauphin Francis. Now that Henry was the heir, his faction became scarce less puissant than his father's. It stood in the sharpest contrast to the splendid, free-living, tolerant Court of Francis, the Court for which Andrea and Lionardo had painted, the Court which established the College of France, which dreamed of the League with Luther

Digitized by Google

and with Soliman. The object of the one party was the expansion of France; they would give one hand to the Turk and one to the Huguenot; they would draw from Italy, from the East, from the Jews, all that could enrich their country. But the aim of the younger party was the centralization of France; they wished to develop a civilization of their own, owing nothing to foreign influences. The party of Francis gave us Rabelais, Marot, the Estiennes, the Castles of Blois and Chambord and Fontainebleau, the germ of the collections of the Louvre, and the College of France. The party of Henry, less concerned with ideas, and far more delicate in expression, enriched the world with Ronsard and the Pleiad, with Anet and Écouen, with the Art of François Clouët and his school. A delicate, precise, charming, but artificial beauty centres in that Court: a second renaissance not passionate for truth, for knowledge, for freedom, for humanity, like the movement that inspired the life of Margaret of Angoulême.

The first consequence of the Dauphin's death was immensely to increase the prestige of Montmorency. He was now on the topmost pinnacle of success. Both Margaret and the Dauphin had used all their influence in his favour. All parties were for him. His skilful generalship had made a victorious campaign. Francis, perceiving the Grand Master to be a keen and ready soldier, and being himself influenced by Margaret's praises of her friend, determined to reward him richly. On the disgrace of Bourbon, the dangerously powerful office of Constable of France had fallen into a wise desuetude. The King determined to revive it for Montmorency. Margaret, never shrewd or suspicious, rejoiced in this triumph of her friend. The news

Digitized by Google

gave general pleasure at Court, for the Dauphin was Montmorency's close ally, and Queen Leonor and Madeleine de Montmorency were near and zealous companions.

These were all for the Grand Master. No one else was powerful enough to hazard a remonstrance. Yes; there was one—one unlikely and ridiculous Cassandra. Madame d'Étampes, hearing of the King's determination, prayed, wept, urged, implored Francis not to give that post to Montmorency. But for that wise once his pretty Anne begged of Francis all in vain.

In the spring of 1538 the ceremony took place. Leading the Queen of Navarre by the hand, Montmorency advanced to the steps of the throne. Francis, taking the sword of state from its scabbard, placed it, bare-bladed, in the Grand Master's hand. At that moment the heralds waved their flags and cried: "*Vive de Montmorency, Connétable de France!*" The rash deed was done.

Montmorency was now only second to the King. In addition to his immense wealth, his office of Constable brought him an income of £24,000 Tournois. Constable, Grand Master, Minister of Finance, Anne de Montmorency had virtually the kingdom at his command. He could rise no higher, be no greater. Neither Francis nor Margaret could aid him more. He became henceforward less the servant than the rival of the King, chief in the Dauphin's rising Court, counsellor of the outraged Queen Leonor. He scarcely concealed his contempt for the magnificences and frivolities of Francis, nor his aversion for the Lutheran views of Margaret. No question now of repaying old benefits, of requiting a long affection. Montmorency, the harsh, frugal, inquisitorial, and dogmatic Con-

Digitized by Google

stable, conscientiously disapproved of Nérac and its refugees. He felt no scruple in trying to destroy the influence which had helped him to his seat of honour.

So, when the peace was made, despite his promises, despite the benefactions of Margaret, Montmorency raised no plea for the restoration of Navarre. The French retained Hesdin and Savoy; there was no question of the rights of Henry d'Albret; and one day, a little later, when King Francis complained of the singular growth of heresy: "Sire, if you would exterminate it," said the Constable, "begin with your Court, and first of all with your sister!"

The cruel word missed its mark. "She loves me too much," said Francis. "She would never believe other than I believe, nor anything that would prejudice my estate." The shaft glanced by King Francis, but it lodged in Margaret's heart. In this year, 1538, her frequent letters to the Constable come to a sudden end. From that day she never liked nor trusted Montmorency, and for a year and more she sat, in vague helplessness, watching all her work unravelled by this man, watching Francis drifting towards the Emperor in desertion of his natural allies.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

(1539–1540.)

A FALSE STEP.

At this time the Emperor's good town of Ghent revolted against him, and beseeched the King of France to grant his protection to Flanders. Here was a brilliant opportunity for Francis. By espousing the cause of Protestant Flanders he would virtually conclude a league between himself and the great schism of Northern Europe, while in defying Charles he would give a pledge to Soliman. This was the dread of Montmorency, the dear desire of Margaret. All through the winter of 1539, the spring of 1540, she is busy with the English ambassadors, trying to win her brother to make a league with Henry VIII., trying to estrange him from the influence of Montmorency.

But Montmorency was all in the ascendant now, and the Turco-Huguenot alliance had lost some of its first attraction to the volatile mind of the King. Francis, under Montmorency, began to think again of Milan, to wish again for the friendship of Charles. Therefore, to the surprise of those who believed themselves his real allies, Francis refused the offer of

Digitized by Google

Flanders. He even promised Charles a safe passage through France if he chose to go that way to reconquer his dominions.

No doubt the Emperor in return promised many golden things. We know that he had sent a messenger to Francis, earnestly beseeching the right to pass through France, and hinting at rewards too great to specify. Francis believed him, and he came—came, to the bitter disgust of the Queen of Navarre, the evident displeasure of Madame d'Étampes, the fiery indignation of Prince Henry, who remembered those French attendants who, accompanying him into captivity, had been sent by the Emperor to the galleys. But Francis insisted on a noble reception for his guest; a certain chivalry of instinct forbade him to recall the dungeon of Madrid. So the Emperor came, to the disgust of France, to the bewilderment of the Protestants, and Soliman, and Venice.

"These men are not a litil astonied," writes Harvel from Venice in November 1539, "to undirstonde of the Emperoure's journey to Flanders by the wais of France, with few horsis. And certeinly they are matters of grete admiracion and exciding the reasons of men to consider, so grete and perpetual enemies have so grete confidence together."

Not only Harvel but all Europe believed that the Emperor, afraid of the power of Francis should he join the League, preferred to grant him Milan and keep him as a friend. The Venetians, thinking themselves forsaken, were in great distress and bewilderment. Soliman said, "These Christian princes know not how to keep their word." Henry of England sent his ambassador to Margaret to learn if Francis will in truth incline towards the Emperor. "I fear," says

Digitized by Google

Margaret at Easter-time in 1540, "I fear the Legate Farnese is trying to draw him from King Henry to the Emperor."

Margaret made as brave resistance as she could. "Never think," she cries to Wallup, "my brother will so lightly lose so faithful and assured a friend!" But in her heart she feels herself powerless to turn the current of her brother's thoughts from Milan. In February she tells Norfolk, "If you would have anything of importance done, seek to win over Madame d'Étampes, who can do more with the King than all the rest. Only she," went on Margaret, "can impress a thing in his head against the Constable; and I myself, when Montmorency had turned the King against me, I had to seek the help of Madame d'Étampes."

"This good Quene is a faythfull frende to your Highness," writes Wallup to Henry VIII. But with the cowardice of her tremulous adoration, Margaret did not dare boldly to oppose the folly of the King. She worked on him vaguely and indirectly, by chance speeches, by the faint contagion of her own convictions, and through the influence of Madame d'Étampes. Even for that she so firmly thought the right and the best, Margaret could not openly remonstrate with her brother's weakness. "These things can only be wrought by Madame d'Étampes," she declares to Wallup. "I will not speak myself. I should be noted partial, and also suspected." And, miserable at her own lack of influence, she cries, with a pathetic denseness, "My brother is of this sort, that a thing being fixed in his head it is half impossible to be plucked away." Poor Queen Margaret!

She could not believe her brother fickle, much less

Digitized by Google

wrong. In the end of spring she declares to Wallup, "The Emperor is a good man." But she goes on, seeing the truth in one supreme moment of disgust, "The King is too light of credence, and trusteth things willingly." Not only Margaret now began to see how little worth were the golden promises of the Emperor, who, having conquered Ghent, sent word to Francis that he could not give him Milan without the consent of the German Electors. This was a quit for Burgundy, which Francis would not yield without the consent of the Notables. By July there was a coolness between the King and the Emperor, and Francis again remembered the Protestant-Venetian-Turkish League. He sent the Royal Order to the King of Denmark. He sent an Embassy to Venice. "But the Venetians now begin to hate the French," says Harvel. He sent an envoy to the Turk; and for some while offended Soliman would not so much as see the envoy. Francis and Margaret occupied themselves with the making and seasoning of certain wild-boar pasties which they sent to the King of England. But Henry, mindful of the fickleness of Francis, would promise now no help against the Emperor.

Francis, nevertheless, was determined to redeem his slip. It seemed natural to redeem it at Margaret's expense. In order to reassure the German princes, he offered his niece of Navarre in marriage to the Duke of Cleves, a Protestant at heart, and avowedly an enemy of the Emperor. "Flanders I can get at any time," said Francis, refusing to accept the Netherlands in lieu of Milan; and probably he thought it well to have a friend so near at hand. But the alliance, though good for France, would be disastrous to Navarre. It could do nothing for the poor confiscated little king-

Digitized by Google

dom. It would secure neither France nor Spain. And the future Queen would be an absentee living on her husband's German territory. Henry d'Albret deeply resented the betrothal. But he was too feeble to oppose the imperious brother-in-law, whose pensioner in some sort he was; powerless, although the Estas of his dominions more than once appealed against this peremptory order of the King of France.

It is only at this moment that we fully appreciate the intense and all-absorbing devotion of Margaret to her brother. This whim of his ran counter to every interest of her husband, of her subjects, even of her child. They are all nothing to her. She cannot conceive that they should oppose their will to that of Francis. Even the passionate anger and grief of the little princess did not touch her mother's heart. Jeanne, still ailing, frightened, not yet twelve years old, wept bitterly at the thought of being given to the care of a stranger, different in language and manners. Her proud and sore little heart rebelled at leaving France to marry a simple Duke. Yet she had been very dull and lonely at Plessis. "She filled her chamber with complaints; the air with sighs. One of the fairest princesses of Europe is fading away in tears; her locks hanging loose, undressed; her lips without a smile! And when King Francis heard this thing, he named the lady to the Duke of Cleves without the consent of her father or her mother," declares Olhagaray.

But it was not because of Jeanne's desolation that the King desired to marry her. She was only a glove to fling down in the face of the Emperor, merely a note of defiance to sound in his hearing. She was a pledge to the Netherlands, and to the Lutherans who were favoured and sheltered by the Duke of Cleves.

Digitized by Google

The little princess must not expect the privileges of a woman. Jeanne could not resign herself to this political necessity. Her father dared not, her mother would not help her. So, taking her case into her own defence, she appealed herself to the uncle whose favourite she was, and whom she knew more nearly than either parent. Having seen the Duke of Cleves, she felt she could never love him; she beseeched her kind uncle not to press the marriage. Francis was very wroth at this questioning of his decision. He imagined, perhaps, that the King of Navarre had urged his little daughter to revolt. His anger came to Margaret's ears. Alarmed and horrified at Jeanne's indiscretion, she wrote to intercede for her rash little daughter.

"But," says Margaret, in a later letter to the King, "if the said Duke of Cleves had been to you all that he ought and that I desired, I would never have spoken against him; we would rather have seen our daughter die, as she told us she should do, than we would have stayed her from going to the place where I deemed she could do you a service." This is no court parlance. Margaret considered that the noblest lot on earth was to live or to die for her brother, the King. Jeanne's revolt, her claims for independence, filled Margaret with something akin to disdain and indignation. She had no pity for the strange proud little girl who, forsaken by father and mother, beaten and coerced, still declared in her weak childish treble that she would never love the Duke of Cleves. Her brother was Margaret's religion; and Jeanne's determination seemed to her as impious as it was disobedient. St. Felicitas might have felt the same had one of her children refused to die for the Cross. She

Digitized by Google

was resolved that her daughter should not fail the King in his need. Indignant that her daughter, hers, should shrink from so honourable a sacrifice, she was determined to subdue that uncompromising and stubborn spirit; indignant, and with the despotic anger of the worshipper whose idol is outraged.

But Jeanne was no silent martyr. She was a decided, brusque, and valiant nature, very French in type. Under the exterior of a charming and *espiégle* brunette she concealed an immense resolution. The day before her betrothal to the German Duke she called the three principal officers of her household into her presence and bade them witness her protestation. She then read aloud:

"I, Jeanne of Navarre, continuing the protest I have made and in which I persist, say and declare and protest again before these present, that the marriage to be made between me and the Duke of Cleves is against my will; that I never have consented to it and never will consent; and that, whatever I may do or say hereafter wherefrom one may argue my consent, it will be done by force against my will and desire and through fear of the King, as of the King my father, and of the Queen my mother, who has threatened me, and has had me whipt by my governess, the wife of the Bailiff of Caen; and several times my governess has exhorted me, by the command of the Queen my mother, threatening me that should I not do, in the matter of this marriage, all that the King of France requires, and should I not consent, I shall be so flogged and so maltreated that I shall die of it, and that I shall be the cause of the ruin and destruction of my father, my mother, and all their house; and all this has put me in such fear—especially the destruction of my

Digitized by Google

said father and mother—that I know of no one who can succour me but God, seeing that my father and my mother have forsaken me; and these know well what I have said to them and that I can never love the Duke of Cleves, and that I will none of him. For I protest that should it come to pass that I be affianced or married to the Duke of Cleves, in any sort or manner that may come about, it will be, and will have been, against my heart and will; and he shall never be my husband, and never will I hold him for such, and the said marriage shall be null, and I call God and you to witness that you sign with me my protestation and recognize the force, the violence, and constraint which is used towards me in the matter of this marriage.

"Jehanne de Navarre.
"J. d'Arras.
"Francès Navarro.
"Arnaul Duquesne."

There is no cause without its martyrs. Little Jeanne, sorely against her will, was now to be tied to the rock. The dragon was invited to come and take her; a heavy German dragon, growling an uncomprehended and barbaric jargon. Jeanne regarded him with loathing and aversion. But no Perseus appeared. Jeanne was sent to her mother at Alençon, and the Duke of Cleves followed her there. To Jeanne, young, high-spirited, brilliant, made by her confined and dreary childhood only the more eager for splendour and for Paris, it appeared a cruel lot to wed this German Duke, twelve years older than herself, whose father was a madman, whose manners disgusted her, whose tongue she could not understand. Her mother had no sympathy with this aversion. Remembering her

Digitized by Google

own first marriage, she did not think her daughter unfortunate. Margaret appears to have liked the Duke of Cleves; and he was at least an earnest against the Emperor. He was gallant in battle, wealthy, tolerant, and a protector of the oppressed. Above all, he could serve her brother Francis. She had small pity for Jeanne.

Nevertheless, having gained considerable influence over Duke William, she managed to ease her little daughter of the most intolerable portion of her burden. She induced the Duke, out of consideration to the childish age and fragile health of Jeanne, to submit to a purely formal marriage, and then to return to Germany, leaving his little bride with her parents for at least another year. Even this respite did not appease Jeanne. The day after her betrothal she signed another protest.

At last the King became impatient. He sent a peremptory message to Margaret, requesting her to bring her daughter at once to Châtellerault, where the Court had removed. The meadows of Châtellerault were overbuilt with palaces and arches made of greenery; jousts and tourneys were held the whole day long. At night they were continued by torchlight, a thing which never yet had been seen in France. Nymphs, dryads, dwarfs, knights, and ladies arrayed after the fashion of Amadis and La Belle Dame sans Merci, hermits in robes of green and grey velvet, all manner of gay and strange masquers inhabited the palaces of boughs. Little Jeanne herself, on her wedding morning, was clad so heavily in cloth-of-gold and silver, so studded and heavy with gems, that she could not walk under the weight of her finery. The King himself was to have led her to the altar. Finding her so weak, a

Digitized by Google

brilliant thought struck him. Here, in the face of France, in the hearing of Europe, he would exalt the bride of the Emperor's enemy at the expense of the dupe of the Emperor.

The King called Montmorency to him. He told the Constable to pick up the little girl and carry her on his shoulders into the church. Montmorency dared not disobey. The Court looked on and marvelled. Indeed, it was a strange sight; that pale childish figure, stiff with gold, and laden with gems like some barbaric idol; and the Constable of France, the highest dignitary of the realm, turned into a porter for a tired child. Montmorency understood the insult. He was angry and in sore despite; he knew that he served as a spectacle to all as he walked in the triumph of his enemies. "My day is done," he began to murmur. "Good-bye to it, I say!" But the Queen of Navarre was glad, and whispered to those near to her:

"That man tried to ruin me with the King. And now he serves to carry my daughter to church."

Jeanne was married then and there, among all those whispers of envy, hatred, and uncharitableness, married, among the splendour that a country groaned to pay for. The Duke of Cleves at once retired to Germany, and the little bride set out for Pau with her parents.

The jealousy of Francis had not hitherto allowed her to visit her dominions. But now the Infant of Spain could not marry her. On the last day of the festivities, the King sent for Montmorency, and dismissed him from his favour. The Emperor was defied.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

THE LEAGUE WITH SOLIMAN.

(1541-3.)

FRANCIS, as we have said, was now resolved to win back his old allies, to disclose his real relations with the Emperor. For the Venetian embassy the King selected Cesare Fregoso, a son of the Doge of Genoa; for Constantinople, Antonio Rincon, a man of profound insight, one of the few who could answer the question of the East. As far as Venice they were to travel together, then Rincon should proceed alone to the Court of Soliman. The two ambassadors journeyed through Piedmont towards the Po, for, owing to the heaviness and corpulence of Rincon, they had resolved to take boat close to Turin and do as much as possible of their journey by water. On the 1st of July 1541 they reached Rivoli, where they were met by messengers who beseeched them to halt, for news had come to the ears of Du Bellay, which it behoved them to learn before they left the town. At midnight Du Bellay himself arrived; he assured the ambassadors that he had discovered a plot on the part of Del Guasto and the Emperor to waylay their boat, murder them, and steal their despatches. But Fregoso laughed at

Digitized by Google

this alarm; he had fought against Del Guasto in honourable warfare, and did not believe a great captain would stoop to such a deed. Rincon did not like to hang back alone; moreover, the corpulent ambassador dreaded the long journey on horseback, which Du Bellay advised. He therefore let Fregoso laugh his natural fears to scorn, and they departed by water, "a more easy way," says Du Bellay, "if less sure."

The next day a second messenger overtook the ambassadors. By him Du Bellay sent them accurate details of the ambush laid for them, beseeching them to return, or at least to send by the courier their despatches back to Rivoli, whence he, Du Bellay, would have them safely forwarded to Venice. Either through shame or false confidence, the ambassadors determined to proceed; but, recognising that they had no right to imperil the safety of their message, they sent the despatches back to Du Bellay. Then, urging their oarsmen to make haste, they were rowed down the river all the night, passing Casale without any risk. They were now within a few miles of Pavia. But a little farther down, at a place called Cantalupo, a boat full of armed men suddenly boarded them, murdered the wise Rincon and the brave Fregoso, took the oarsmen and threw them into the dungeons of Pavia. Thus it was supposed the fate of the ambassadors would remain shrouded in mystery. But a second boat, conveying the attendants of Rincon and Fregoso, escaped from the ambush. Rowing swiftly to the bank, the servants escaped ashore and fled into the woods, and thence back to Du Bellay at Rivoli. Du Bellay hushed the matter up until he discovered the prison of the oarsmen who had witnessed the actual murder. This at last coming to his ears, he had the bars of their win-

Digitized by Google